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EVENT AND RESPONSE:

A STUDY IN THE CHURCH'S HERMENEUTICAL TASK

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the School of Theology

at Claremont, California

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Religion

by

Neil C. Coleman

"

June 1971

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This dissertation, written by

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Thomas Trotter

Dedicated to my wife Lynn, whose patience, encouragement
and assistance make her equally deserving of this degree.

AND

To Dr. Eric L. Titus who proved to be both friend and teacher.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For years man has read into the documents known as the New Testament those insights which seemed to best fit the tradition as it was celebrated within the church. Thus he saw in the gospels a biographical narrative centered around the life of Jesus of Nazareth and emphasizing the passion story of the crucifixion and resurrection. It is the contention of this paper that in the present stage of biblical scholarship it is possible to hold dialogue with the Primitive Church through the expression of its apologetic as it was interpreted by the evangelists or exegetical schools which produced the documents in the New Testament.

An attempt will be made here to show that the possibility exists to adduce the questions that were confronting the evangelists and teachers of the Primitive Church through the answers that were given in the form of apologetics found in the documents. Further, it will be shown that these apologetics formed the nucleus around which the early church framed its hermeneutic. It is the contention of this paper that where the answers are known it is possible to move backward to the questions which produced those answers.

Further, an attempt will be made to show that such knowledge places a mandate upon the church of today to adapt its preaching and teaching to the new concept of the documents which we call the New Testament.

A. THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

Religion, generally speaking, has been and is a Christocentric expression. It has centered in the so-called life of the historical Jesus and the theory of the divine inspiration of the documents. It has tended, as do the documents, to confuse the Christ of Faith and the Historical Jesus in such a way that the attributes of the one are nearly lost in the concept of the other. Such concepts have prevented the challenging of the authenticity of what was contained in the gospels. Religion has taught that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, performed miracles, spoke in the manner recorded in the translations of the gospels and under the circumstances and conditions contained therein, was crucified by Pontius Pilate under the urging of the Sanhedrin led by Caiaphas and Annas, was dead and buried and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God the Father and judges the quick and the dead, and will return with his hosts of angels riding on a cloud at the end-time.

The problem has been well stated by F. C. Burkitt:

We sometimes forget that the Gospel has moved the world, and we think our faith and devotion to it so tender and delicate a thing that it will break, if it be not handled with the utmost circumspection. So we become dominated by phrases and afraid of them . . .

For, as Father Tyrrell has been pointing out in his last most impressive message to us all, Christianity is at the Cross Roads. If the Figure of our Lord is to mean anything for us we must realise it for ourselves. Most English readers of the New Testament have been too long content with the rough and ready Harmony of the Four Gospels that they unconsciously construct. This kind of "Harmony" is not a very convincing picture when looked into, if only because it almost always conflicts with inconvenient statements of the Gospels themselves, statements that have been omitted from the "Harmony," not on any reasoned theory,

but simply from inadvertence or the difficulty of fitting them in. We treat the Life of our Lord too much as it is treated in the Liturgical "Gospels," as a simple series of disconnected anecdotes.¹

One important problem facing religious leaders today is a reconstruction of the attitude toward the documents; that is, to approach them with a mind that is open to what they are and what the Primitive Church was trying to say concerning them. These documents must be shown to be not the documents of divine mystery but as the records of the experiences of "The Beginnings," containing interpretation, liturgy, and apologetic. We must see them in the words of C. F. D. Moule as "simply the response of the Spirit of God within the Church to the challenges of its environment and history."²

It has been the author's experience that Christian Education of recent years has been concerning itself primarily with motivation and educational theory. These are important areas of concern, but somehow those responsible for Christian Education material have either failed to emphasize the importance of content change or have been unable to convince their publication boards that it is a needed part of the educational program of the church. Renewal of the foundational understandings that are reflected in the curriculum is equally as important as new methods and theories of teaching. The questions may

¹Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. viiff.

²C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 4.

legitimately be asked "Motivation to learn what? Education for what?" The answer may well be that where the underlying premise is based upon faulty understanding, alert minds will catch the discrepancy and reject that which is offered as being "irrelevant."

We must, with Moule, find a way to "lead readers back to the New Testament with an imagination more alive to the questions that need to be asked--and especially the questions that actually were asked in those early days and from which the New Testament took its genesis."³

In response to the imitative nature of traditional Christianity's "world view" and the inviolability of scriptural interpretation, most modern educators have stressed the necessity of making Christianity a religion that comes out of the past and becomes a life style or "crossing point" in today's life. The question that becomes obvious is: "How can we make a transition such as this without the knowledge of the questions which are reflected in the answers, or apologetic, that we find in the New Testament documents?" Biblical scholars have been seeking for this kind of relevance for over a hundred years, but it has, for the most part, remained an intellectual exercise and has not "drifted" down to the church itself. Again, with Moule, it should be emphasized that in the New Testament milieu the answers that were sought and given were "more than an academic exercise--they were the response of the Spirit of God within the Church to the challenges of its environment and history."⁴ The Church and its

³*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴*Ibid.*

ministry possess a mandate to determine the nature of the questions and challenges that were placed upon that Primitive Church, and to seek once again for the response of the Spirit of God within *our* Church to the challenges of *our* environment and *our* history.

Alvin Toffler makes the point in his book *Future Shock*:

An event that affected only a handful of people at the time of its occurrence in the past can have large scale consequences today. The Peloponnesian War, for example, was little more than a skirmish by modern standards. While Athens, Sparta and several nearby city-states battled, the population of the rest of the globe remained largely unaware of and undisturbed by the war. The Zapotec Indians living in Mexico at the time were wholly untouched by it. The ancient Japanese felt none of its impact.

Yet the Peloponnesian War deeply altered the future course of Greek history. By changing the movements of men, the geographical distribution of genes, values, and ideas, it affected later events at Rome, and, through Rome, all Europe. Today's Europeans are to some small degree different people because that conflict occurred.

In turn, in the tightly wired world of today, these Europeans influence Mexicans and Japanese alike. Whatever trace of impact the Peloponnesian War left on the genetic structure, the ideas, and the values of today's Europeans is now exported by them to all parts of the world. Thus today's Mexicans and Japanese feel the distant, twice removed impact of that war even though their ancestors, alive during its occurrence, did not. In this way, the events of the past, skipping as it were over generations and centuries, rise up to haunt and change us today.⁵

It is the impact of the knowledge that "whatever happened to some men in the past affects all men today"⁶ which places the mandate upon us. A mandate that we understand what it was that happened and how they responded. We are no longer in the position wherein we have the

⁵ Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 17ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

luxury of perpetuating the myths of tradition; we must seek for the events and responses that stimulated those myths in order that we may construct a new and relevant life myth.

B. METHODOLOGY

The work of research into the origins of Christianity can proceed by two methods. First is the *thesis*, in which a mass of data is assembled, the pattern is discerned, and conclusions are drawn. Secondly there is the *hypothesis*, in which a pattern is observed before the facts have been fully investigated. This method is not free from the dangers that beset speculation but it has its justification in that it opens up new perspectives. It is used as a key to a new understanding. The *Formgeschichte* advocated by M. Dibelius is an example of the hypothesis which has had farreaching results in New Testament scholarship.

In general it is this latter approach that will be used in this paper, although it should be noted that the findings and conclusions of such form critics as E. Earle Ellis, C. H. Dodd, C. F. D. Moule, A. J. B. Higgins, J. A. T. Robinson, David Daube, Barnabas Lindars and Edwin Freed have made the work somewhat less speculative.

Research may also proceed along two distinct paths of data gathering. First there is the process of original research into the documents themselves with the results of that research documented, reported, and conclusions drawn. The second is the manner in which this paper will be developed. In this method the author has relied

primarily upon library research. He has gathered the data of other scholars and formed his conclusions as a result of this study.

It will be the purpose of this paper to correlate the findings of critics relating to the form of the gospels and other New Testament writings, with a broader interpretation of traditional definitions, in such a manner as to show both a new as well as a broader understanding of the tasks of clergymen and religious educators.

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The second chapter will deal with the contributions of some of the early scholars such as J. Rendel Harris and C. H. Dodd in raising the questions which first started investigation into the exegetical purposes and methods of the writers of the books of the New Testament. Chapter III will add some of the basic understandings of the schools of exegesis that existed in the community at Qumran. The fourth chapter will deal with some of the later form critics and how the information gained from the Qumran Scrolls has affected the view of the writings in the New Testament.

In Chapter V we shall attempt to deal with the problem of definitions. An attempt will be made to show the necessity for broadening our understanding of some of the traditional concepts as they concern apologetics and hermeneutics, and how these affect our ability to communicate within the Church. Chapter VI will show that, at least within this broader and more meaningful definition, the New Testament contains an apologetic. In Chapter VII it will be shown

that this apologetic was used both as a means of explanation of Christianity as well as a part of a pluralistic *kerygma* and *didachē*.

In Chapter VIII we shall deal with the problem of the use of this apologetic as a literary answer to the questions that a hostile and pagan world was asking. We shall show that this gives us a "window" into the past and the opportunity to hold dialogue with the Primitive Church.

The final chapter will deal with the conclusions drawn by the author and how this information can affect the manner and content of our preaching and teaching in today's church.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT

A. TESTIMONIES

It has long been recognized that the New Testament is perforated with passages, interpretations and allusions to the Old Testament. Some have seen this as merely the incorporation of liturgical use of what was considered scriptural during the time when the early Church was making the transition from Jewish worship forms to Christianized interpretation of the same forms. Others have interpreted Old Testament usage in the simple form of "proof-text" while giving major emphasis to the "biographical" nature of the documents.

J. Rendel Harris advanced the theory in 1916 and again in 1920¹ of the existence of a book of Testimonies. His hypothesis was that there was in circulation in the early church a collection of Old Testament passages which were used as anti-Judaic apologetic. This theory has since been discarded for the most part² but the term

¹ J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*. 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916-1920).

² See, however, C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 83ff. who does not agree that the theory can be abandoned on the face of the evidence that has been presented. "It is difficult, even so, to see, *prima facie*, why written collections should not also have been in circulation, and M. D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), has questioned whether these claims can be upheld."

testimonies remains as a means of describing the use which was made of such passages in the New Testament. Barnabus Lindars puts it this way:

For they are constantly introduced to show how the Church's faith is rooted in the Old Testament revelation, and very frequently there is clearly an apologetic purpose. They are adduced to prove the Church's claims, when the unbelieving Jews contest them. They are thus testimonies to the truth of Christianity.³

In the thinking of Lindars it is not so important that there did, in fact, exist such a book of Testimonies as it is to recognize that there were a group of Old Testament passages which were used in this manner. Thus, he claims, the term testimony is a valid one to describe such passages.

J. W. Doeve,⁴ E. Earle Ellis,⁵ T. W. Manson,⁶ and others support Lindars in this analysis. Their position is one that postulates simply that, without necessarily using written forms at all, the Christians learned to use whole sections of scripture in the light of the events they had experienced. These sections came to be associated together in their minds and thus formed a part of the early Christian tradition.

³ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 6.

⁴ J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954).

⁵ E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

⁶ T. W. Manson, "The Argument from Prophecy," *Journal of Theological Studies*, XLVI (1945), 129ff.

Lindars points out that they may be regarded as testimonies in still another sense:

Ancient writings vary widely in their worth as evidence of the facts which they profess to describe. But even where this must be rated at its lowest, the work retains its value as showing what men made of the facts. Historians today lay increasing stress on the importance of such 'non-intentional data.'⁷ It is in this way that the quotations may be regarded as testimonies to early Christianity. The choice of the quotation, the form of the text, the method of interpretation, the context into which it is introduced, and comparison of several citations of the same text, will all yield valuable evidence.⁸

Thus we come face to face with one of the important and growing trends in the study of history, whether "secular" or "sacred." Valuable evidence is to be found in what is called "non-intentional data." This is that data which is not intended to carry the bias or prejudice of either the author or his sponsor. It is even possible to find value in such "non-intentional" data as the prejudice itself when it is recognized as such and its direction ascertained. Thus the use made of these quotations makes them valid testimonies to early Christianity since we can learn much simply by observing the way in which they are used for this tells us about the questions and the questions tell us much about the problems.

⁷ Lindars, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14, citing Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Putnam, 1954), p. 61: "There can be no doubt that, in the course of its development, historical research has gradually been led to place more and more confidence . . . in the evidence of the witnesses in spite of themselves."

⁸ *Ibid.*

B. THE SUB-STRUCTURE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

In 1952 C. H. Dodd delivered what are known as the Stone Lectures. In the lectures he revealed an examination of the Old Testament quotations which gave a new direction to their study. One of the principles used by Dodd was the examination of both quotations and allusions in the light of the Old Testament contexts from which they are drawn. One of Dodd's conclusions is that these passages are not drawn from the Old Testament at random but rather show evidence of being thought through by the first Christians in their attempt to work out the meaning of the redemptive action of Christ. Some of this was based on his earlier works in which he asserted that the historical antecedent of *didache* (teaching), "is to be found in the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha."⁹ He believes that the basic models or patterns are descendent from these Jewish precursors. The models or patterns for *kerygma*, on the other hand, he accounts for by the theory that the early church "took over a large corpus of eschatological predictions from the Old Testament and the Apocalyptic literature."¹⁰ This, he said, was used by the early Christian community to show that "these predictions were fulfilled in the story of Jesus."¹¹ In this he claims that both *kerygma* and *didache* had their antecedents in particular types of Jewish literature. The earliest

⁹ C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

patterns of Christian thought are therefore found in the process of using materials found in different bodies of Jewish literature.

Passages were chosen and used from the Old Testament and Apocrypha in the development of the *kerygma* and *didachē* as the result of a "true historical memory."¹² Upon this basis he formulated the conclusion that these passages are the source of the "regulative ideas" of the primitive theology.¹³

Lindars sees the importance of Dodd's work as follows: "He has ascertained the passages which form the 'sub-structure of all Christian theology' and has also shown the method which was used by the first Christians in formulating it."¹⁴

These early scholars opened the door to later investigation with their discovery that a pattern of usage did indeed exist which cast a new light on the study of the intent and purpose of the evangelists or the schools who recorded their experience and interpretation of a "true historical memory."

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹³ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952).

¹⁴ Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

CHAPTER III

LIGHT FROM QUMRAN

The Stone Lectures of C. H. Dodd were delivered before the first publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Qumran caves. These documents have given us a new light upon the practice of exegesis in the period immediately prior to and during the era of primitive Christianity.

A. THE MIDRASH PESHER

The importance of the Qumran documents, and in particular the *Habakkuk Commentary*, lies in the fact that they reveal a type of biblical interpretation quite distinct from that of the rabbinic tradition.

In them a series of significant events, more or less contemporary with the writer, is regarded as the reality to which the prophecy points forward. If the prophecy is systematically applied to these events, it may be expected to reveal the divine meaning of them, because it is the inspired word of God. Of course it is impossible in practice to apply a prophecy verse by verse to a particular series of events. It is bound to involve a certain amount of wrestling with the text, to say the least. But in fact the Qumran exegetes use their interpretations to elucidate the obscurities of the text itself, so that in the course of their exposition they introduce delicate alterations and modifications to accord with their convictions. One may say that these commentaries, and the life of the Sect revealed by the Scrolls as a whole and by the excavations of its buildings, indicate a continuous work of biblical study along these lines, constituting a 'school of exegesis.'¹

¹ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 15.

In order to appreciate the importance of this finding it is necessary to pursue, however briefly, some research into the works of some of our more qualified scholars in the field of Qumran interpretation.

Probably the most noted of these scholars would be F. F. Bruce² and W. H. Brownlee.³ Specifically, we shall see that the opinion expressed by Lindars, particularly in the classification of the *pesher*⁴ is verified.

The *pesher* is best defined as a kind of interpretation. It gets its name because the Qumran commentaries, "after citing each verse, begin the exposition with the word *pishrō* = its interpretation. An interpretative text-form can be conveniently called a *pesher* text, though this is not strictly correct."⁵

The *pesher* is an interpretation which is given by divine illumination and cannot be gained by ordinary power or wisdom. Both the Septuagint and Theodotion contain the word *mystērion* as the representative of the Hebrew word *rāz* whenever it occurs in Daniel, and Bruce suggests that it might be helpful to remember this when we meet the word *mystērion* in the New Testament (Greek). Thus, in the book of

²F. F. Bruce, *Biblical Exegesis in The Qumran Texts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

³W. H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls For the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

⁴Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 15.

Daniel, it is clear that the *rāz* (the mystery) is divinely communicated to one person, and the *pesher* (the interpretation) to another. It is not until the mystery and the interpretation are brought together that the divine communication can be understood. This principle, that the divine purpose cannot be properly understood until the *pesher* has been revealed, as well as the mystery (*rāz* or *mystērion*), underlies the biblical exegesis in the Qumran commentaries. The *rāz* was communicated by God to the prophet, but the meaning of that communication remained sealed until its *pesher* was made known by his chosen interpreter.⁶

The principles of biblical interpretation which begin our understanding of the Qumran method of exegesis are summed up in the following propositions.

1. God revealed His purpose to His servants, the prophets, but his revelation (particularly with regard to the time when his purpose would be fulfilled) could not be understood until its meaning was imparted to the Teacher of Righteousness.
2. All the words of the prophets had reference to the time of the end.
3. The time of the end is at hand.⁷

In the *Habakkuk Commentary* there are some clear examples of this method of exegesis which aid our understanding. In the example we must understand that the modern exegete would find the meaning of the book most readily grasped in the light of its historical setting. This was a period toward the end of the seventh century B.C., possibly in the reign of Jehoiakim (608-598 B.C.). It is known on independent authority that Jehoiakim was guilty of oppression and violence

⁶Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁷*Ibid.*

(Jer. 22:13-17). Habakkuk cries out against the oppression and violence which are rampant in high places, and the answer he receives from God is that the Chaldeans are being raised up to execute the divine judgment on the unrighteous rulers of Judah. Later he must renew his complaint, for the Chaldeans are guilty of an even greater brutality and impiety than those against whom they are called to execute the judgment of God. Habakkuk is told this time that the Chaldeans too will disappear when they have served God's purpose; divine righteousness will one day be manifestly vindicated on earth, but in the meantime His call is for faith and trust: "The righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).⁸

The comparison continues with Bruce's explanation of the commentary from Qumran.

In the Qumran commentary the two chapters are atomized: each phrase is made to fit into a new historical situation regardless of its contextual meaning (as we understand it). Thus Habakkuk 1:13 ('thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong, why doest thou look on faithless men, and art silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?') is patently addressed by the prophet to God as part of his protest. But in the commentary it is not God, but the righteous remnant, that is 'of purer eyes than to behold evil,' and it is not God, but a group of men called 'the house of Absalom,' that is upbraided for looking on faithless men (without taking action against them) and for remaining silent when the righteous man is overwhelmed by the wicked. Again, in the previous verse, it is (according to the prophet) the Chaldeans who are ordained as a judgment and established for chastisement; in the commentary it is the righteous remnant. In order to make the biblical text applicable to the situation of his own day, the commentator simply disregards its original context, and even

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 10ff.

overrides the natural relationship of its component clauses. Here is what he says, construing verse 13 along with the second half of verse 12 in such a way as to extract a meaning foreign to the prophet's thought (1Q p Hab. v. 1-12):

Thou hast ordained him to execute judgment; and thou O Rock, hast established him to inflict chastisement, even him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on wrong. The interpretation of this saying is that God will not destroy His people by the hand of the nations, but into the hands of His elect will God commit the judgment of all nations, and by the chastisement which they inflict on those who have kept his commandments in the time of their distress will condemn all the wicked of His people. For this is what he means when he says: 'of purer eyes than to behold evil.' The interpretation of this is that they did not commit unfaithfulness according to the lust of their eyes in the epoch of wickedness. 'Why doest thou look on faithless men, and art silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?' The interpretation of this concerns the house of Absolom and the men of their counsel, who were struck dumb when the Teacher of Righteousness was chastised, and did not go to his aid against the Man of Falsehood, who rejected the law in the midst of all their congregations.'

Along with this atomizing exegesis there goes at times an interesting treatment of textual variants. When one reading suits the commentator's purpose better than another, he will use it, although he may show in the course of his comment that he is aware of an alternative reading. He has been suspected of deliberately altering the text here and there in order to make the application more pointed, but the suspicion does not amount to proof.⁹

B. OTHER METHODS OF EXEGESIS

Similar examples of the commentator's use of the text to find meaning in the current situation (to him) could be shown along with his use of variant texts, allegory, and interpretation.¹⁰ In the

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11ff.

¹⁰ See also Brownlee, *op. cit.*

interest of brevity, it shall suffice to sum up the methods by which these principles were put into practice.

1. The biblical text is atomized so as to bring out its relevance to the situation in the commentator's day; it is in this situation, and not in the text, that logical coherence is to be looked for.

2. Variant readings are selected in such a way as will best serve the commentator's purpose.

3. Where a relation cannot otherwise be established between the text and the new situation, allegorization may be used to this end.

4. Biblical prophecies of varying date and reference are reinterpreted so as to apply to the end-time introduced by the ministry of the Teacher of Righteousness, and not least to the career of the Teacher himself.¹¹

In the light of the above it would seem reasonable to agree with Lindars that there was in fact a style of exegesis distinct from that of the rabbinic tradition in use during the period immediately preceding the Christ event.

¹¹Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORM CRITICS

A. THE SCHOOL OF ST. MATTHEW

In one of the more significant studies of recent years Krister Stendahl, reacting specifically to the theories of preaching and liturgy as the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the gospels, suggested the probability that the Gospel of Matthew was the product of a school of Christian exegesis modeled after the Qumran Community. He substantiates his claim by showing the "close affinity between the type of Old Testament interpretations to be found in a certain group of Matthew's quotations and the way in which the Sect of Qumran treats the book of Habakkuk."¹ Stendahl has noted well the ingenuity of the School of St. Matthew in the use of the midrash *pesher* of the Qumran sect.

Thus the Matthean school must be understood as a school for teachers and church leaders, for this reason the literary work of the school assumes the form of a manual for teaching and administration within the church. As we shall see, the Matthean type of midrashic interpretation is not principally the halakic or the haggadic one favored by the rabbinic schools, but it closely approaches what has been called the midrash *pesher* of the Qumran sect, in which the Old Testament texts were not primarily the source of rules, but the prophecy which was shown to be fulfilled.²

Stendahl has shed a new light on the relationship between the

¹ Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1954), p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

sources in the Scrolls and their development in Matthew, and how the "form of the quotations in the scrolls helps to explain the milieu of the gospel."³ He shows that the ingenuity of the early church leaders and teachers is shown in their use of texts containing apocalyptic material. These contain very few direct quotations in a strict sense, but show freedom and skill in the construction and incorporation of these apocalyptic ideas into passages.⁴

Stendahl's major source of data for his study in the Gospel of Matthew was the formula quotations.⁵ These show an explicit formula of fulfillment similar to that found only in the exegetic and hermeneutic structure of the Qumran Scrolls. He attributed these rightly to the midrash *pesher*, which he distinguishes from the midrash halakah and midrash haggadah.⁶ These formula quotations, based on a midrash *pesher* method, were worked into other types of quotations, and the particular rendering of them was formed into a handbook for the school.⁷

Generally favorable reviews of this thesis have been made.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

⁵ R. C. Worley, *Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 125, citing Stendahl, *op. cit.*

⁶ See also D. Daube, "The Earliest Form of the Gospels," *New Testament Studies*, V:3 (April 1959), 174, for a conflicting view.

⁷ Stendahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-206.

T. W. Manson⁸ confirms the plausibility of Stendahl's ideas. He points out additionally, using the work of Jeremias, that, in general, parables addressed to the enemies of Jesus or to a general audience in early sources later were directed to the disciples. Parables that were originally eschatological in character were given a paraenetic turn through allegorization. Both of these tendencies are particularly strong in Matthew. Manson concluded that the School of St. Matthew was "interested not only in discovering the fulfillment of O.T. prophecies in the life of Jesus, but also in interpreting and applying the words of Jesus as a New Torah."

Robert Worley credits the findings of Stendahl as the central point in his thesis on Christian Education. "The confirmation of the midrash *pesher* method and its relation to Matthew was the essential point for my own thesis."⁹

Stendahl's theory receives unexpected support from J. W. Doeve in his work on *Jewish Hermeneutic on the Synoptic Gospels and Acts*. Doeve shows that a great deal of the material in Matthew is the work of Christian scribes who were technically proficient in their work. He uses as example Matthew 13:52, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the Kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." Doeve claims that this is a verse that refers to the teaching-preaching of midrash.

⁸ T. W. Manson, "Review of the School of St. Matthew," *New Testament Studies*, I (1954-55), 55-56.

⁹ Worley, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

This means that everyone who has a satisfactory relationship with the Kingdom of Heaven and knows how to interpret Scripture as the scribe does will be able to teach new midrash which has not been taught or heard before. Certainly the implication is that the disciples were aware of the fact that it was Jesus' relationship to the Kingdom of Heaven which enabled him to interpret Scripture in a new way.¹⁰

In verse 51 he had asked: "Have you understood all this?" The basis of their understanding the parables of the Kingdom (Ch. 13:36-50) is their recognition of his relation to the Kingdom of Heaven which has now entered human life in him. When Jesus expounds Scripture it is because he is in this relationship. This is why he gives a different midrash and this is why Christian scribes will teach new things. They have a basis in a new understanding of Scripture because of a new relationship. Both technical competency in exegesis and a new relationship to the Kingdom of Heaven are necessary for Christian teaching-preaching. The scribe of Judaism has a new relation to the Kingdom of Heaven and he becomes a Christian scribe.¹¹

The birth of Christianity, Doeve suggests, came in the milieu of scribalism which became Christian. The basic difference to be found between Doeve and Stendahl is that Doeve posited that the roots of Christianity lay in rabbinic scribalism while Stendahl has endorsed a scribalism similar to that found in the Qumran Community. Actually there is no reason why both influences could not have been at work in the scribal schools of the early church. Indeed there is sufficient evidence to suggest that both are to be found. In either case it is well to note that there was a new relationship which brought about new

¹⁰ J. W. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954), pp. 193-4.

¹¹ Worley, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127; citing Doeve, *ibid.*

interpretations. It is probable that these incorporated both the *pesher* and a new *midrash* in the effort to interpret the Scriptures in the light of their experience.

B. MARK AND QUMRAN

There are some scholars who theorize that there is in Mark a decided influence by the Qumran Community. Schubert proposes that the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist is similar to that of the teachings in the Essene documents regarding the two messiahs.

He argues:

Regardless of whether one considers these statements (Mark 1:7-11) as historical or as a result of Christological views current in the primitive church, they can be related to the teachings of the Qumran Essenes that a priestly and a Davidic Messiah were to come and the latter is subordinate to the former in cultic matters.¹²

It is the opinion of the author that there exists in Mark a variety of forms of exegesis, including both *pesher* and rabbinic *midrash*. Daube has presented a most convincing case that Mark 12:1-37 is a Christian form of the *haggadah*¹³ and is supported in this thesis by Robert Worley.¹⁴ J. A. T. Robinson has theorized that the above-mentioned passage in Mark 1:7-11 is in reality a residue of the Elijah motif remaining in the gospel narrative.¹⁵ Worley proposes that there

¹²Kurt Schubert, *The Dead Sea Community* (London: Black, 1959), pp. 155-156.

¹³Daube, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

¹⁴Worley, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

¹⁵J. A. T. Robinson, "Elijah, John and Jesus: an Essay in

is evidence of Qumran influence in the reply using Psalm 110:1 found in Mark 12:35-37.

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit declared,

*The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
till I put thy enemies under thy feet.*

David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?" (R.S.V.)

Daube contends that in the use of this passage Jesus is pointing out the difficulty of the conception that the Messiah was to be both son and Lord of David. The hope of the people was in this idea of a Davidic kingdom. It was in the idea of a new David who would be the "son of David" that their hope centered. It was he who would bring in the new kingdom. It is in this brief story of Jesus teaching in the temple that Worley sees the influence of the Qumran ideas of a Davidic Messiah and a Davidic kingdom.¹⁶ Worley rightly sees the influence of Qumran in this passage.¹⁷ The element seen by Worley is present, but, this is also an excellent example of the use of the *pesher*.¹⁸

Detection," *New Testament Studies*, IV:4 (July 1958), 263ff.

¹⁶Worley, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁷See also Bruce, *op. cit.*, for additional passages showing the influence of the Qumran Scrolls upon the Marcan idea of Davidic Messiahship.

¹⁸The question of this passage in its context as *pesher* will be treated in Chapter VI.

C. LUKE-ACTS AND QUMRAN

It should go without saying that any influences of the Qumran Community that were found in Mark would in all probability be found in both Luke and Matthew. Schubert has documented these similarities in his work on the Dead Sea Community.¹⁹

The similarity between the Nativity story in Luke and the Qumran Hymns of Thanksgiving has been noted by both Schubert²⁰ and Bruce²¹ particularly with reference to the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*.

The striking similarity between the speech of Stephen in Acts 7:2-53 and the Dead Sea Manual of Discipline has been noted by A. F. J. Klijn²² with particular attention to the common themes of covenant and community, grace and rebellion revealed in history, societies composed of two groups, the wicked and the righteous, generations of wicked Israelites and of righteous ones being a part of both.

The speech of Peter in Acts 2 is an example of the use of Old Testament passages that are accompanied by their Christian *pesher*. This offers us an excellent example of early Christian exegetical

¹⁹ Schubert, *op. cit.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ F. F. Bruce, "Qumran and Early Christianity," *New Testament Studies*, II (1955-56), 189.

²² Worley, *op. cit.*, citing A. F. J. Klijn, "Stephen's Speech--Acts VII. 2-53," *New Testament Studies*, IV:1 (1957).

technique. Perrin²³ comments that "the pericope about David's son is a 'historicization' of an early Christian exegetical tradition and a product of the early church; it is not a historical reminiscence of the ministry of Jesus."

It should again be stressed that the author does not attribute this phenomenon to pure "construction" but rather to a means of interpreting the experience through which the early Christians had passed into a viable "life-myth" by which it could be preserved. The *pesher* was a valuable exegetical tool for this purpose.

D. THE FOURTH GOSPEL

The Gospel of John presents almost another problem in the study of exegetical technique. It is not, as has long been recognized, constructed either on the pattern of the Synoptics or with the same purpose. It is known primarily as a "faith" document in which its author, using sources which probably include the Synoptics or at least Mark and Luke-Acts, interprets his faith as to what the coming of Jesus meant. It will be readily understood by the above that John accepted and used the general contentions of the *pesher* method.²⁴

It is in the Fourth Gospel that the greatest resemblance is found to the formula quotations of St. Matthew. Moreover, this gospel gives in explicit terms a description of the methods used to attach

²³Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 23.

²⁴Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

these citations to the words and works of Jesus.

After having quoted the prophecy in Zechariah on the entry upon an ass, John adds "This his disciples did not understand at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered how this had been written of him and how it had happened to him (12:16, cf. 2:22)." In 5:39-47 the theological basis for the Christian interpretation of the O.T. is given in equally explicit words. It starts with the saying to the scribes "you search the Scriptures, imagining to have eternal life in them" and passes to the verdict that the Jewish interpretation leads astray: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, since it was of me that he wrote."²⁵

Stendahl cites the use of six formula quotations which are introduced by the evangelist himself, 12:15, 12:38, 12:40, 19:24, 19:36, 19:37, all but the first of which were introduced by the term πληροῦσθας, and further that this word is also used by Jesus in 13:18 and 15:25. Once again in 2:17 the words of Jesus show kinship to this material as is seen in 2:22.²⁶

One of the outstanding features of the Fourth Gospel is that the evangelist is consistent in his inconsistency with regard to the manner of his quoting the Old Testament. He is free from dependency upon a tradition where the words of Jesus are conformed to the Septuagint: "as far as the distinction between the words of Jesus in the proper sense and the words of the evangelist can be maintained in this gospel."²⁷ He seems to be on his own, showing an acquaintance with both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint.

²⁵ Stendahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-163.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

This is exactly what might be expected in a gospel which developed in the School of St. John,²⁸ a school where the Scriptures were studied and meditated upon in the light of the preaching, teaching, and debating in which the church was involved. Compared with the formula quotations of Matthew, those in the Fourth Gospel are less elaborate; but the Ephesian school possessed and used the authority to produce a translation of their own. To them this was more natural than the use of the text of the LXX. in which the synoptic tradition took refuge as a matter of course. Thus the Johannine method is not what is usually meant by loose citations, or those more or less freely quoted from memory. It is rather the opposite since the form of John's quotations is certainly the fruit of scholarly treatment of written O.T. texts.²⁹

A. Fridrichsen used a term that gained some recognition with Scandinavian Scholars which refers to the defining of the early church as *chaburah*. He used this term in particular with reference to the production of biblical literature. In using the Qumran Scrolls we get an insight into an actual Jewish *chaburah*. It is contended by Stendahl that this brotherhood acted as a school which expounded and preserved the doctrines and rules of its founder such as we find in the Manual of Discipline. The kind of scholarly work that we find in this type of school can be sampled and tested in its commentary on Habakkuk. Stendahl shows that there is an affinity between this type of interpretation which was found in the *chaburah* of Qumran and groups of Matthean quotations.³⁰

When Fridrichsen spoke about the apostolic *chaburah* as the creative milieu of the New Testament literature, he may have had the Fourth Gospel in mind since he held the view

²⁸ Stendahl, *op. cit.*, p. 163, notes his p. 31 in which he endorses this contention.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

that this gospel was produced in the Johannine school at Ephesus. As we shall see, this view of his also finds support in the manner in which the Fourth Gospel deals with the O.T.³¹

It is not the intention of this author to posit the existence of such a "School of St. John" or of a "School of Ephesus," although the possibility is one that is looked upon with favor as offering explanation for some of the problems in the documents.

We do intend to show that the *pesher* type of exegesis was sufficiently used in the gospels to indicate that the basic intent of the writers was not to verify the biographical data of the life of Jesus but to explain how the experience they had lived had created a new understanding in which the words of the Scriptures were applied to their "present situation" and were seen as fulfilled. In this way, in addition to exegetical methods, the "realized eschatology" of the Qumran Scrolls bears resemblance to the New Testament documents in a manner to strongly suggest influence.

Lindars is correct in his view that John shows too much of the personal impress to be the work of a "school." That he was influenced by an exegetical tradition, whether in the church at Ephesus or

³¹ Stendahl, *op. cit.*, p. 163, citing A. Fridrichson, *Johannes-evangeliet* (Stockholm: 1939). His footnote continues: The reference to a school behind the Fourth Gospel was given by W. Heitmüller, "Zur Johannes-Tradition," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XV (1914), 207. His intention was to determine the authorship. He did not consider the function of the school in the framework of primitive church life. This was done, however, by Bousset, *Judisch-Christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom* (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1915), where he argues for a consistent school tradition.

elsewhere, seems to this author to be evident but that any theory of school production seems inadequate. On the other hand, it appears that he knew and used traditions of exegesis and that he accepted the general contentions of the *pesher* method.³²

E. PAUL AND THE PESHER

It is a general contention that rabbinism has exerted multiple influences upon Paul. However there is evidence that he was also influenced by the traditions of exegesis exhibited in the Qumran documents which were current in his milieu, or that the church had already adopted these traditions and they were used by Paul as well as the other early Christian teachers and preachers.

Robert Worley establishes the point that Paul was influenced by the Qumran type of interpretation in two ways. First by the method of the midrash *pesher*, and second the obvious parallels of meaning between passages from the Scrolls and portions of Paul's writings.³³

Ellis cites I Cor. 15:54f. (Isa. 25:8; Hos. 13:14) as the most notable example of *pesher* quotation among the writings of Paul.³⁴ Bruce gives an example of Habakkuk 2:3f. as an example of the Christian *pesher* that is found in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. Here they are interpreted to mean: "He who through faith is righteous shall

³² Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³³ Worley, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³⁴ E. Earle Ellis, "A Note on Pauline Hermeneutics," *New Testament Studies*, II (1955-56), 132.

live."³⁵ B. J. Roberts cites Colossians 2:7f. as an illustration of an exposition based on the *pesher* method.³⁶ E. Earle Ellis, in reviewing the work done by other scholars and his personal research into Paul's Hermeneutic, makes the following conclusion:

There are a number of Pauline quotations which indicate that the *pesher* method was employed not only by the apostle but in the pre-Pauline period of the Church as well. The apocalyptic outlook, in its messianic expression, is implicit in the whole of the Pauline hermeneutic, and is particularly obvious in 2 Cor. 6:2: "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation."³⁷

Ellis goes on to point out that there are some twenty citations in which the evidence of the *pesher* is most certain.³⁸

Taken as a whole, the Pauline citations reflect in substantial measure a *pesher*-type moulding of the text which in some cases is determinative for the NT application of the passage. While this at times involves a choosing and rejecting between texts and/or Targums known to the apostle, more often the interpretative paraphrase appears to be created *ad hoc* by Paul or by the early Church before him. This type of *pesher* arises from the NT's attitude towards and understanding of the concept of 'quotation' itself, as Manson has noted: "We are long accustomed to distinguish carefully between the text which--in more senses than one--is sacred, and the commentary upon it and the exposition of it. We tend to think of the text as objective fact and interpretation as

³⁵ Bruce, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

³⁶ B. J. Roberts, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Essenes," *New Testament Studies*, III (1955-56), 61.

³⁷ E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 143. Ellis notes: "The manner in which this citation is parenthetically inserted suggests that the whole verse--the OT text plus the interpretation--was taken as a quotation by Paul. Cf. I Cor. 15:45; I Tim. 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:19."

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

subjective opinion. It may be doubted whether the early Jewish or Christian translators and expositors of Scriptures made any such sharp distinction. For them the meaning of the text was of primary importance; and they seem to have greater confidence than we moderns in their ability to find it. Once found it became a clear duty to express it; and accurate reproduction of the traditional wording of the Divine oracles took second place to publication of what was held to be their essential meaning and immediate application. Odd as it may seem to us, the freedom with which they handled the Biblical text is a direct result of the supreme importance which they attached to it.³⁹

According to Ellis, Paul's exegetical method might best be described as "grammatical-historical plus." He points out that the apostle did not ignore the historical significance of the text; "neither does he play fast and loose with the grammar if care is taken to understand the precise purpose and meaning of his citation." He points out that it is precisely at the point where grammatical-historical exegesis ends that Pauline exegesis begins.

The former discipline could say 'these' possibilities lie within the grammar, and 'this' is the probable historical significance. But Paul would probably begin by saying, 'The OT Scripture has a wider meaning than its immediate historical application, even OT history is God-moulded history whose significance does not lie merely in the event but in the meaning of the event for its later fulfillment.'⁴⁰

Further support for the basic understanding of this theory is found in C. F. D. Moule's article "The Use of Parables and Sayings as

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145-146, citing T. W. Manson, "The Argument from Prophecy," *Journal of Theological Studies*, XLVI (1945), 129-136, "Some of Manson's conclusions on the particular text in question (Heb. 10:37f.; cf. Rom. 1:17) may be open to qualification, but the fundamental principle which he here delineates is clearly present in Pauline and NT exegesis; and it may explain some of the variations in parallel texts."

⁴⁰ Ellis, *Ibid.*, p. 147-148.

Illustrative Material in Early Christian Catechesis."⁴¹ In this article Moule is pointing to the fact that a body of illustrative material consisting of parables, allegories, and familiar authoritative sayings may have been current in the early church for the teaching of catechumens. We have dealt with this same general idea in the "Testimonies" of J. Rendel Harris.⁴² Moule, however, has added some new dimensions which are worthy of our consideration. He points out that there are some parallels between material found in the Pauline epistles and Lucan use of parables and sayings. Moule makes the point that both the attitude alluded to in these situations and the vocabulary are strikingly close. He points out several illustrations such as Luke 10:38-42 and I Corinthians 7:35.

He then sets out four forms of this similarity that he has noted in his study. They are (a) The completely unadorned injunction; (b) an injunction supported by an Old Testament quotation; (c) an injunction supported by a gnomic saying, whether of Jesus or from general proverbial sources; (d) instructional material illustrated by a full-length parable, allegory, or anecdote. He points out that this kind of study may serve to bring into clearer light the manner in which not only the Old Testament Scriptures and proverbial wisdom, but also the "floating" units of traditions about the Lord, were applied

⁴¹ C. F. D. Moule, "The Use of Parables and Sayings as Illustrative Material in Early Christian Catechesis," *Journal of Theological Studies*, III (1952), 75f.

⁴² J. Rendel Harris, *Testimonies*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916-1920).

by Christian pastors.⁴³

We must once again agree with the words of Lindars as he summarizes the work of E. Earle Ellis.

He shows that the chief influence in St. Paul's of the Scriptures is not rabbinic exegesis, whether Palestinian, Hellenistic or Alexandrian, but the Church's own version of the midrash *pesher*. It is something which he can take for granted in expounding the faith, and use creatively for his own purpose. This places the use of Scripture in the Pauline Epistles in the same category as that of the Fourth Gospel. It is not the work of a school, but the writer knows and uses such scholarly work; and he continues the tradition by his own positive contribution along the same lines. Consequently we can imagine that such exegetical study was an element in the life of the Church in all its chief centres, and the more fruitful results of it were widely diffused by the apostolic missionaries and catechists. They would be useful in the work of preaching, teaching, and especially in the defence of the faith against the objections of unbelieving Jews in the synagogues where the *kerygma* was presented. St. Paul's preaching in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16-41) may not be an authentic record of his own work, but is still an excellent example of the way in which the early Church used scriptural exegesis.⁴⁴

F. THE OTHER BOOKS

As was pointed out above⁴⁵ the speech of Stephen in Acts 7 gives us an excellent opportunity to examine a different type of Jewish-Christian apologetic in which we are able to discern the similarities between early Christian exegesis and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

One of the important details of Klijn's brilliant analysis

⁴³ Moule, *op. cit.*, pp. 75ff.

⁴⁴ Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴⁵ See page 26.

centers around what Stephen says regarding the building of the temple. In the first place Stephen speaks about the tabernacle (7:39-46), and then about the temple (7:47-50). In speaking of the tabernacle nothing is said that would point to its rejection. Klijn points out that this may have been because the tabernacle was made *κατὰ τὸν τύπον ὃν ἐωράκει* (7:44). He only repreaches the Israelites for making the golden calf. He quotes Amos 5:25-27. It is the building of the temple that he refers to as a sinful act. To support this Isaiah 66:1-2 is quoted. "Here it is said that God does not live *εν χειροποιήτοις*. Obviously *χειροποιήτοις* stands in opposition to *κατὰ τὸν τύπον ὃν εωράκει* (cf. v. 41: *καὶ εὐφρατινοντο ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν ἀυτῶν*)."⁴⁶

Simon gives the background scholarship on verse 47 which clarifies the importance of 7:46-47 in the relationship of tabernacle and temple. Briefly, he starts from Psalm 132 where he notices similarities with II Samuel 6:17, I Chronicles and II Samuel 7:3, 5, and 6. He points out that the Greek rendition of the two verses in 7:46-47 read as follows: Δανίδ, ὃς εὗρεν χάριν ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἤτησατο εὔρειν σκήνωμα τῷ οἶκῷ Ἰακώβ. Σολομὼν δὲ οἶκοδόμησεν αὐτῷ οἶκον.⁴⁷ Klijn points out that "it was wrong that Solomon changed the *σκήνωμα* into an *οἶκος*."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Klijn, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁴⁷ M. Simon, "Saint Stephen and the Jerusalem Temple," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, II (1951), 127f.

⁴⁸ Klijn, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

In this verse, however, we notice variant reading. Some MSS. have Θεῷ (A C E Byz vg and sy), others show the reading οἶκῳ. The MSS. supposed to be the best have οἶκῳ. Nevertheless it is rejected by many commentators. The reasons for this rejection are summed up by Simon. They are (a) αὐτῷ in vii. 47 refers to God and (b) Ps. cxxxii 5 shows Θεῷ.⁴⁹ This difficulty is, however, how an original Θεῷ should be changed into οἶκῳ. The only explanation given is the one by Hort. He supposed that an original τῷ had been misread. The reading τῷ κυρίῳ, however is nowhere to be found. The reading οἶκῳ, as being much more difficult, is to be preferred. The alteration of the quotation of Ps. cxxxii is very striking and must have a deeper meaning. If we follow the reading οἶκῳ we get, apart from the opposition σκήνωμα-οἶκος, one between 'a house for Israel' and 'a house for God.' It is quite possible that this opposition is the one Stephen desires to show, as it is questionable whether Stephen's hearers really discerned an opposition between σκήνωμα and οἶκος. In this passage we notice a tendency to show that God is not in need of anything and especially not of sacrifices in the form of animals. The idea that the temple is built especially for Israel is also to be found in Josephus.⁵⁰ The same idea occurs in Acts 17:24-5. The underlying conception is wholly in agreement with those current in some Jewish circles.

This means that Stephen points to a house or tabernacle within the house of Israel in which God is only served in a spiritual way. The house is especially made for the benefit of Israel. All this has been misunderstood by Solomon and by almost all the Jews.⁵¹

Klijn then makes his point. The idea of a house within the house of Israel as a substitute for the temple and in this manner "the real temple of God" is not to be found in Jewish literature apart from the *Manual of Discipline*. The importance of this--and the importance cannot be overemphasized--is that it not only sheds light on Stephen's

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30, citing Simon, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.

⁵⁰ Josephus, *Antiquities* VIII, 107, (Solomon's speech on the occasion of the dedication of the temple).

⁵¹ Klijn, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

speech, but also on passages like I Peter 2:5 and Ephesians 2:21-22 where the Church is referred to as the real temple of God.⁵²

It may also be noted that this may be reflected in the passage in John 4:21-24 in which the emphasis is upon the service of God not in the temple "but in spirit and in truth."

C. F. D. Moule points out that there is a similarity between what Stephen is saying here and the message to be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Its main argument runs in part along the very same lines as Stephen's--that true Judaism lies in advancing forward to Christ, not in retreating back to an entrenched position; that the tabernacle is the sketch (or rather copy!)--not of the Solomonic or any other material Temple, but of the true sanctuary in heaven; and that Moses is the pattern of that greater Moses who was to come. It is certainly not impossible, in view of this, that the apparent allusion in Heb. xiii. 7 to martyr-leaders may include Stephen himself.⁵³

Moule contends that this epistle offers us a fascinating example of the end-product, the written form, of "precisely the kind of debate which is represented as in progress in the trial of Stephen; and it bears witness to yet another 'school' of interpretation, besides what may be postulated behind Matthew." It is theorized that this is an example of a carefully--"indeed brilliantly--constructed

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Moule, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-80. He footnotes: "As a matter of fact, it is not impossible to fit Hebrews ii. 3f. into the same guess . . . This is entirely appropriate as a description of Pentecost, as we find it in the Acts story, by one who, though not an original disciple of Jesus had been drawn into the Christian Church at that time--exactly as Stephen and his fellow-worshippers in the synagogue might have been."

apologia of an educated, Alexandrine type Jewish Christian."⁵⁴ Under the extreme temptation, perhaps under nationalist pressure, to revert back into Judaism, he is using all of his resources of scriptural exegesis to show the finality of Christ and his absolute superiority over Moses and all Jewish approximations.⁵⁵ It is in Numbers 13:8 that Moses is described in superlative terms, as the only one with whom God spoke mouth to mouth. It is Moule's contention that Hebrews 3:1ff., which reflect quotations from this very context, presents a conflict with the "proof-text mind of a Jewish opponent, who had been saying 'Your claims for Jesus, even if they are soundly established, place him at best no higher than Moses.'"⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Moule, *Ibid.*, p. 76: "In Hebrews 6:13ff. much emphasis is laid upon the assurance provided by the divine oath in the passage about the promise to Abraham (Gen. xxii. 16f.). The argument leads straight on, however, into the Melchizedek theme (vi. 20ff) and one might have expected immediate reference to the divine oath in the Melchizedek Ps. cx. This, however, is reserved until vii. 20f. This suggests, I think, very careful and thoughtful arrangement. The writer wishes to introduce the Melchizedek theme and to follow up first its Genesis-symbolism; he will not allow himself to be diverted to the oath of Ps. cx until he is ready. Then, and not until he has finished with Genesis, this second oath-passage occurs impressively, to pick up that earlier reference to the Genesis oath. Incidentally, why does Heb. vi. 13 refer to God's oath in indirect speech rather than citing the words of the quotation in the next verse?"

⁵⁵ Moule, *Ibid.*: "Another motive for such a move, operative at times of persecution for Christians, was to come under the protection of Judaism, like that Domnus, to whom Serapion of Antioch addressed a treatise, 'who had fallen away from the faith of Christ, at the time of the persecution (of Severus), to Jewish will-worship' (Euseb. *H.E.* vi. 12.1)."

⁵⁶ Moule, *Ibid.*

It is in these passages and similar ones cited by Moule⁵⁷ that he finds the evidence which prompts him to say:

These passages and the Moses-passage in Heb. iii have been singled out for special mention here as pointers (which have not always received so much attention as other citations) to the situation behind this epistle. Taken with all the other uses which are made of the Old Testament in the course of its argument, on which the commentaries have plenty to say, they point to a body of readers used to subtle exegesis of the Greek Bible, and they make it plausible to postulate for Hebrews, as K. Stendahl has postulated for Matthew, a 'school' of Christian apologetic: a systematic reexamination and reapplication of the Greek scriptures by educated Christians in debate with scripture-searching non-Christians.⁵⁸

J. A. T. Robinson has postulated that Johannine Epistles were intended for a group of Christians living and worshipping in a situation whereby they were acquainted with the previously published Gospel of John and thus were established in its understandings and interpretations which we have previously reviewed.⁵⁹

Fitzmyer has made an excellent comparison of the ways in which the Qumran sect used the Old Testament quotations. He has divided them into five basic considerations: (1) introductory formula (similarities here are more with style and content than with actual quotations); (2) literal or historical in which the passage is used in the same sense as it is used in the Old Testament; (3) modernized in which the words of the Old Testament refer to a specific event in

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 77f.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ J. A. T. Robinson, "The Destination and Purpose of the Johannine Epistles," *New Testament Studies*, VII (1960), 56ff.

their original context, but which are vague enough in themselves to be used by the author in some new event on the contemporary scene; (4) accommodated texts in which the application is similar to the number two above but where the Old Testament text is "wrestled" from its original context, or modified, to suit the new situation; and (5) eschatological texts in which the Old Testament text contains a promise or threat about something that is to occur, or be accomplished, in the *eschaton*. The Qumran author cites this text as something that will occur in the new *eschaton*. He points out that this is sort of a middle ground between the second group and the final two, for in many cases the Old Testament text is quoted in the sense originally intended but is also extended to a new situation which is expected.⁶⁰

He points out that the above categories are to be found in both the Qumran documents and in the New Testament. By comparing the uses he deduces that the exegetical practices of the New Testament writers is quite similar to that of their Jewish contemporaries, which is best illustrated by the Qumran literature.⁶¹

We may characterize both the Qumran and the New Testament use of the Old Testament *in general* as a literal exegesis, when this is defined in opposition to the allegorical exegesis of Philo and the Alexandrian school of later times. There are, it is true, some allegorical interpretations in both, but these are not characteristic. Nor is it a *strictly literal* exegesis which respects the original meaning and context of the words quoted; however, examples of this do occur occasionally.

⁶⁰ J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies*, VII (July 1961), 297ff.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

Normally it was an exegesis based on the words quoted, even though the relevance of them to their historical setting meant very little to the Qumran or New Testament writers. This is often due to the fact that both the Qumran sect and the early Christians believed that they were living in some sense 'in the end of days' . . . Again, common to both was the implicit desire to enhance some recent event in their histories or some idea or person with an Old Testament association, as a result of a certain analogy which they saw between the event and some event in Israel's history.⁶²

It is becoming more evident as we study the New Testament writers use of Old Testament quotations that a Christian form of exegesis was emerging out of the forms current in the milieu of the primitive church. The ones we have singled out for this particular study are those that appear to fit a form of thought and exegesis that have been either foreign to Christian scholarship of the past, or have been thought to be uniquely "Christian" in their methodology. We are becoming increasingly aware that the forms are those of their contemporaries and that what makes them "Christian" is not the form but the presuppositions from which the exegesis or use of tradition proceeds.

G. CONCLUSION

Our conclusions should never be given without the cognizance of the fact that the New Testament writers, nor their contemporaries in Qumran, read their scriptures like a modern biblical scholar. To modern critical scholarship it appears that the biblical exegete often arbitrarily disregarded the sense and context of the original. Yet

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 330-331.

part of our task is to discover the sense in which such writers used their scriptures, and, to discover the presuppositions which they brought to the reading of them. If this is to be done we must be able to analyse the presuppositions, the old sense and context of the text, the new sense and context, the setting in life in which it was used, and the audience to which it was directed. That the writers held the Old Testament in reverence as the word of God is indicated by the introductory formula which reveals the profound depth of their beliefs. We must, however, realize that it went further than this, for they obviously believed that their interpretive use of it was legitimate for the religious purpose of their compositions. They at no time make the claim that they are quoting from what we call its literal sense, and, that they do so on occasion should only draw our attention to the obvious reinterpretations that also appear. It should make us aware that there is something of momentous importance that we must also see in its context as the divine word or the divine will.

That this kind of study should result in 'schools' which made it their purpose to organize and exegete this material for the use of the church should also not surprise us because the experience through which they had lived placed upon them a mandate to tell the world that this event was divinely inspired and was part of the plan of God for men. That they should use the methods which would be understood by their contemporaries would be only natural and it is in this direction that we must look if we are to find the questions that "need to be asked--and especially the questions that actually were

asked in those early days and from which the New Testament took its genesis.⁶³ It may also lead us to answers in how we are to, indeed how we can, interpret the events of our religious history to a new day and a new age. Such a search may help to show us how their church responded "to the Spirit of God within the Church to the challenges of its environment and history,"⁶⁴ and show us the way to "go and do likewise."

⁶³ Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 77ff.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER V

A MATTER OF DEFINITION

A. THE HERMENEUTICAL TASK

Webster defines the term *hermeneutics* as follows:

hermeneutics, n. the science of interpretation, or of finding the meaning of an author's words and phrases, and explaining it to others; exegesis: particularly applied to the interpretation of the Scriptures.¹

The cryptic term "hermeneutics" is actually derived from the office of the god Hermes whose task, as the messenger of the gods, was to communicate and interpret the will of the gods to the mortals. In the English this term "hermeneutic" only partially corresponds to the Greek noun *hermēneia*. In the words of James M. Robinson, the "meaning of the Greek term was determined by the Greek verb *hermēneuein*, corresponding to the Latin verb *interpretari*, to 'interpret.'²

The Greek noun *hermēneia* meant "interpretation" so broadly that it could be applied to any endeavor that was involved in bringing clarity to that which was unclear. "Indeed it is this broad scope of clarification, that seems to be basic to *hermēneia*. It is in this way that one is to understand the constant application of *hermēneia* to the

¹ Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language (New York: World, 1969).

² J. M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," in his *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 1.

messages of the gods, in that they are by their very nature mysterious, obscure, and in need of clarification." Even after the *hermēneia* in question has become specific and concrete the *hermēneia* of the will of the gods doubtlessly shared in this broad, numinous sensitivity.³

Robinson cites as an instance of this numinous quality of theological *hermēneia* the spiritual gift "*hermēneia of tongues*."

This gift, listed in 1 Cor. 12:10 alongside of speaking in tongues, is not simply to be identified with the capacity for rational translation. For the speaking in tongues did not (pace Luke) involve foreign languages, but rather ecstatic, divine ("angelic" 1 Cor. 13:1) utterance, calling for interpretation, such as is required for various kinds of obscure divine communication.⁴

The interpretation ranks as itself a charismatic gift because it has interpretive power and character. It goes even further in 1 Corinthians 14:26 where it carries the force of "illumination" even though it is still paired with speaking in a tongue and still technically translated as "interpret." The gift has independent significance in communicating divine will.⁵

In the narrow sense of the word, "*hermeneutic*" becomes the science of interpreting the scriptures and, in its traditional form, the meaning narrowed down to be virtually synonymous with exegesis. In its broader sense, it is the philosophical elaboration of the basis, the vital elements, the sum-total, and the application of the principles ruling an understanding, communication, and exposition of an event, an idea, a manifestation, a document, or of language as such.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Thus Marcus Barth could say: "The meaning of hermeneutics may approach the sense of epistemology, *i.e.*, of the scientific elaboration on the problem of knowing."⁶

Hermeneutics becomes, in this sense, an event of language. Robinson presents sufficient evidence that in the Greek understanding of language, which was invented by Hermes as a medium of interpretation, that it in itself is interpretation, not just the object of interpretation. "Hence *hermēneia* can mean 'linguistic formulation' or 'expression,' and it can be used to designate a work on logical formulation or artistic elocution, the discipline we today call 'speech.'"⁷

This understanding of language itself as interpretation has hardly been sensed in the traditional view of hermeneutics; however, it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the so-called new hermeneutic. "This would embrace the whole of the theological enterprise as a movement of language." It would embrace the entirety of its scope from the attestation to the Word of God that is in the Scripture to the voice of God which is heard anew in the preached sermon. It cannot be and "is not confined to a subdivision within Biblical studies treating of the theory of exegesis."⁸

Another meaning of hermeneutics that did not carry over from

⁶ L. Goppelt, H. Thielicke, H. Müller-Schwefe, *The Easter Message Today* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), p. 19.

⁷ Robinson, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

the Greek into traditional understanding was that the meaning of *hermēneia* could also take the specific form of "translation" out of a foreign tongue.⁹ This includes the deeper implications of translating from one language to another, such as man's historicness. It is one of the distinctive understandings of the new hermeneutic that part of its task is the translation of meaning from one culture to the other, and from one situation to another. The new hermeneutics has to do with the business of translating meaning.

Some of the deeper implications of this can be seen in the archaic use of the word "translation." In some ecclesiastical circles it is still acceptable to refer to the "translating" of a bishop from one See to another, or the "translation" of the saints to Heaven. This usage has been largely replaced in contemporary language, but Robinson makes this point:

The Greek verb *hermēneuein* betrays much the same sensitivity in its proclivity for the use of the prefixes *dia-* and *meta-*, equivalent to the Latin prefix *trans-*, when meaning "to translate." Indeed Plato made the same analogy without benefit of the play on words, when he referred to "translating and ferrying (*hermēneuon kai diaporthmeuon*) to gods what comes from men and to men what comes from gods!"¹⁰

In still another form the noun *hermēneia* meant commentary. This did not involve a foreign language but rather the clarification of the obscurity of a text or utterance. Luke 24:27 contains the passage where the resurrected Lord "interpreted" [*diermēneusen*] to

⁹ *Ibid.* Robinson footnotes: "John 9:7: 'Siloam,' which is translated (*hermēneuetai*) 'sent.'"

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It is in this sense of the Greek usage that *hermēneia* is synonymous with *exēgēsis*, "a synonymity carried over into their Latin translations, *interpretatio* and *expositio* respectively." This, of course, carried over into our English synonyms 'interpretation' and 'exposition.'¹¹

The meaning of *hermēneia* as commentary is just now being revived. This practice of the art of interpretation is another of the significant aspects of the new hermeneutic. Hermeneutic in the sense of "commentary" can become coterminous with Christian theology as the statement of the meaning of Scripture for our day.¹²

The Greek noun *hermēneia* thus embraced the whole broad scope of "interpretation," from "speech" that brings the obscure into the clarity of linguistic expression, to "translation" from an obscure, foreign language into the clarity of one's own language, and to "commentary" that explicates the meaning of obscure by means of clearer language. The profound implication that these three functions belong together as interrelated aspects of a single hermeneutic was lost in traditional hermeneutics, which was the theory of but one aspect of *hermēneia*, exegesis. This narrowing of the concept may suggest that some of the dimensions of the hermeneutical task had been lost from sight. Thus the rather explicit return to the breadth of *hermēneia* on the part of the new hermeneutic is to be seen not as etymological pedantry, but rather as a new grasp of the proportions and nature of the hermeneutical task.¹³

Ernst Fuchs makes the unqualified statement that "The New Testament is itself a textbook in hermeneutic."¹⁴ That is to say, and this is a major contention of this study, the writers of the New

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ E. Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Hermeneutical Problem," in Robinson, *Ibid.*

Testament were attempting, by the use of language and imagery, to interpret the experience of faith which had possessed them in the Christ event. The New Testament itself became a document of language; a language event. It was not, and could not be, the event itself. It could only be the vehicle through which the event was interpreted into language. Within the context of the new hermeneutic the task becomes one of seeing past the construction that is used by the writer to lead us past the subject matter itself.

It is not as if the 'facts' should be despised! But they should be returned to that language to which they belong¹⁵ . . . For this does not fall outside the historical comprehensible discussion with the past, but on the contrary shows that historical analysis can find precisely the language intent of its text, if only it proceeds in a sufficiently reliable way.¹⁶

The hermeneutical task becomes one of translating the manner in which language and form is used in the events of past time and culture, and how it can be understood and become existentially meaningful in our present situation. This means that we must close what Carl E. Bratten calls the "horizontal gap." The gap that exists between an event that happened at a particular time and place in history, *i.e.*, the Christ event, and our problems of existence in our time and place.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁶ E. Fuchs, "Response to the American Discussion," in *Ibid.*, p. 242.

¹⁷ Carl E. Bratten, *History and Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 130.

In speaking of the hermeneutical problem as it effects preaching in the modern era, Charles W. F. Smith, the Edmund Swett Rousmaniere Professor of Literature and Interpretation of the New Testament in the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, says that one of the problems in the modern church is that we have lost our audience. He is not referring to the ones who are staying away, although he concedes this point, rather he refers to what he calls the "build-up" of modern society.¹⁸

The modern ethos then (here only sketched in its immediate surface manifestations) works against the successful communication of Christian truth and its appropriation as a basis for action in the world. It is one factor in the "loss of audience" and a large one. It helps keep people away from a church that has not received the build-up. Interest in such a religious institution seems an irrelevant, personal hobby. More seriously, it removes the people who do come to church as an effective audience even while they are there. It is not entirely that they will not hear but that they can not.¹⁹

Fuchs makes much the same point when he states that the point of departure for the New Testament and one of the significant aspects of the hermeneutical problem for our time has to do with hearing. It becomes a problem for both the exegete and the educator to find out "to what extent our mental activity, our seeing, is bound to a hearing. This is the hermeneutical problem."²⁰ (Italics mine)

B. COMMUNICATION

One of the things that becomes immediately apparent is that we

¹⁸ C. W. F. Smith, *Biblical Authority for Modern Preaching* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 25ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁰ E. Fuchs, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

are dealing, at least in part, with a problem in communication. A problem in communicating the world view, the internal and external histories of the writers of the documents, and the existential relationships of these views to our own personal external and internal histories.

H. Richard Niebuhr believes that there are two ways of knowing about the world. One which he calls "external history" includes such things as those experiences that are available through eyewitness accounts, history books, and, today, such things as experiments which can be duplicated and verified through the scientific laboratory. In the view of Niebuhr, external history consists of impersonal data, that which is external, and is available to everyone. It is made up of ideas, actions, and events. In the Christian tradition, this external history would include the "historical Jesus," and the record of ideas, reports, and beliefs that are found in the New Testament.²¹

Second, he says that there is "internal history," which is the personal story that each person carries around about "his" time. The significance to each person of the concept of time is important in that when we speak of external history we are speaking of time that is of temporary duration, but, when we speak of time in the sense of internal history, we are speaking of time in the sense of *my* duration.

What is past is not gone but is present in *my* memory. What is future is present as *my* potentiality. Whereas external history views society as individuals held together

²¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 43ff.

by forces which the sociologist can describe, internal history views society as a community of persons, or selves, whom I know. It is the difference between reading the statistics on cancer research and experiencing the death of a friend by cancer.²²

The distinction between the external and internal history becomes important to our discussion on communication for two reasons. "First, it becomes clear that only through internal history does revelation about God occur. Events occur in external history, but events have meaning only within 'my internal history.' The second reason is that external history may contain its own internal verification, such as algebraic equation or language symbolism, which 'proves' itself. Internal history is verifiable only by persons communicating or witnessing to other persons."²³

A revelatory moment, then, is a special occasion in our internal history which provides us with an image by means of which all the occasions of life become intelligible. This may be a moment out of the past, such as the records of Paul's journeys to Rome or the story of Bonhoeffer's martyrdom in Germany. Or it may be the memory of a person in our life, or the act of a person toward us right now. The central thing is that it becomes part of our personal inner history and helps us make sense out of the confusing welter of ideas and experiences within our life.²⁴

One of the most important aspects of this theory for the modern church is that we must be able to recognize the difference between the external history that is part of the record, the internal history of the writer or writers that helped to shape that record,

²² William F. Fore, "Communication for Churchmen," in B. F. Jackson, Jr. (ed.) *Communication--Learning for Churchmen* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 79.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

and our own expression and relationships through which it takes meaning in our own lives and community. If we are to remain true to the faith which we profess, it is imperative that we extract that which the internal history of the writer demanded be expressed in order to re-create that element in our own internal history.

The relevance of this distinction between two histories to the subject of revelation must now have become apparent. When the evangelists of the New Testament and their successors pointed to history as the starting point of their faith and of their understanding of the world it was internal history that they indicated. They did not speak of events as impersonally apprehended, but rather of what had happened to them in community. They recalled the critical point in their own life-time when they became aware of themselves in a new way as they came to know the self on whom they were dependent. They turned to a past which was not gone but which endured in them as their memory, making them what they were.²⁵

Thus it becomes important that we recognize the fact that these writers had not only the internal history of the experience, but they also had an external history through which they spoke. Just as we have our external history in the New Testament which helps shape and interpret the internal histories of each of us, so these writers had an external history in the records and traditions of Israel which interpreted the experience through which they had lived.

In the lives of the evangelists there were guidelines through which they communicated the event of the experience. They had history, the symbolism of language and art, as well as the present experience on which to base their hermeneutic. Their task became one of

²⁵ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

translating, interpreting, commenting, and communicating an experience of internal history which was stimulated by an external event. In order to make this experience relevant and understandable to those to whom they spoke, it was necessary to incorporate the common external history of the listener or reader into the context of his internal history. Therefore, as the event had meaning through the history of the writer, incorporated within his memory and thus made present in the internal sense, he was bound to call upon the commonality of that history in the reader to re-create the experience in internal history.

The problem in communicating this internal history to the man of the modern age is that we no longer hear the words with the same common memory that was shared between the writer and his early readers.

If we are to translate this into communication theory, we must first recognize the above presupposition of historical authorship. The history of the writer gave him a curtain of conditioning through which he viewed the event. Thus, it will be readily seen that the author of any document, New Testament or otherwise, views the event that he seeks to record from his own particular internal history. To put it into formula we would have to say that this event is seen as follows: the record = the event + the internal history + the external history of the writer. In this manner it will also follow that the position of the exegete as he looks at the document, which has become part of his external history, as the event + the internal history + the external history of the writer + the internal history of the

exegete himself.

When we hear the record of the New Testament we hear only through the memory that is a part of our own internal history. This process reduces the New Testament in its present language to the position of an old book which speaks to the internal history of a people long since removed from the pages of external history. It would seem relevant then to posit that the task which we would assign to critical scholarship, more commonly called the hermeneutical task, is to attempt the return to the event stimulus itself. This can be accomplished only if we seek to reestablish the common memory through which the author of each document spoke.

C. HERMENEUTIC AS COMMUNICATION

If we accept the view established above that hermeneutic is the interpretation, commentary, and translating of the text, and that it is basically a language event; and if we accept that it is the task of the communication model through which we must operate to remove the cultural "debris" in order to transmit the stimulus or experience itself, we begin to arrive at the dimensions of the task before us. It is through these two basic concepts that we shall raise the questions of the intent of the writers as they spoke through the medium of a common external history to stimulate the common memory and thus change the internal history of the reader or hearer, and how we use the same technique to challenge a common memory in the people of our time and re-create an experience that will change their internal history.

Hermeneutics is defined as the theory of understanding the movement of the Word of God from the biblical text to the proclamation in the present time. In this sense it is, as Robinson points out, "coterminous with Christian theology as the statement of the meaning of Scripture for our day." Hence, theological hermeneutics is a doctrine of the Word of God becoming event again and again within the sphere of human language.²⁶

Bultmann has seen the hermeneutical task as one that asks us to go beneath the language of a text to an understanding of the existence which it expresses. In other words, that the language enshrines a portion of the existence of the interpreter. He would insist, with both Fuchs and Ebeling, that the hermeneutical problem includes the unfinished task of translation not in the superficial sense of reduplicating the words of one language into more or less equivalent words of another language, but in the sense of a radical transference of meaning, a transculturation of the Word into new words.²⁷

In like sense, when we check the dictionary definition of the word "communication" we find the following attributes listed:

The act of transmitting
facts or information transmitted
written information
conversation or talk
access between persons or places

²⁶ Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁷ Bratten, *op. cit.*, pp. 137ff. citing Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960).

interchange of thoughts and opinions
an art that deals with expressing ideas effectively
a subject taught at various levels of education²⁸

Webster lists as "archaic" one additional definition which in reality may give us more insight than some of the others. This archaic definition is "common participation." The word "communication" comes directly from the Latin *communicare*, to share or to impart or to partake. It has the same basic meaning as "communion," which itself depends for its Christian significance on a *double entendre*, referring to both the Lord's Supper and an action or situation involving sharing.²⁹

These definitions fit the concept of internal and external history that was expressed previously. Calling upon the common memory creates the "hearing" that makes communication possible. Of course, it must go into a broader concept if we are to manage the totality of communication that is at the heart of the Christian message.

Fore insists that effective communication involves the "secularization" of understanding in much the same way that Fuchs and Ebeling would describe it.

He would insist that moments of communication, particularly those that are revelatory in nature, are not supernatural or otherworldly. These moments occur in every situation. "There is nothing which cannot become a bearer of the nature of reality and thus become revelatory, whether it be nature, history, groups, individuals, or the spoken or written word or symbol." This, of course, is at variance with the presuppositions most religious leaders seem to hold in their attempts to communicate.

²⁸Fore, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.

²⁹*Ibid.*

Much of the communication which comes through "church channels" implies that "we" possess a knowledge of God in a rather objective fashion which we, the sender, would like to "communicate" or impart to the recipient. Nothing could be further from the truth. No one can possess 'the Word' in this sense; we can only attest to our personal apprehension of the Word and, at best, provide some significant external history about persons of faith, in the hope that the recipient will begin to appropriate this as part of his internal history.³⁰

In the thought of Ebeling this involves a double movement in the task of linguistic hermeneutics. It means that on the one side the movement must be backward through the communication media used by the evangelists to the historical Jesus, and on the other side it must be forward into the "world come of age" which requires a new language, a "non-religious interpretation of Biblical concepts."³¹

Communication means imparting something about existence by means of commonly understood relationships, between man and man, man and his environment, or man's environment and environment.³²

Similar definitions can be found in the works and understandings of such men as Dr. Irving Lorge, a social psychologist at Columbia University, Franklin Fearing of U.C.L.A., and Norbert Wiener. The thing that is consistent in all these definitions is the concept of shared or commonly understood relationships. It is through this commonly shared external history that man finds the medium of communication.³³

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³¹ Ebeling, *op. cit.*, pp. 98ff.

³² Fore, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

³³ *Ibid.* Fore cites these definitions without reference.

What this means to hermeneutic is that the symbols or language that is used is a communication device which is employed to convey meaning. In order for communication of the internal history that is being transmitted to take place, the sender must use commonly shared ideas and history as the external content of the communication. Thus, the hermeneutic which was used by the writer or which will be used by the interpreter must have a common sharing of language and symbol if the message is to be received. It is in this sense that we refer to the hermeneutical task as a language or communication event.

Going to the experience of the event itself it is not to be considered as communication until it is externalized in some form.

If one asks whether Beethoven communicated anything when he composed a symphony in his head, the answer is no; not until Beethoven wrote his music down on paper or hummed it or played it, did he communicate. In other words, nothing was communicated until his ideas and feelings as expressed in his music became external to himself. Psychologists have begun to relate the internal thought and feeling process to communication trains or synapses between axons, dendrites, and other electrical phenomena; however, until they learn more effectively how to plug directly into our thought processes--which they are beginning to do--we will have to depend upon man to express his own "inner self."³⁴

Content requires form, which usually is written or spoken language, although it could be Morse code or pantomime. There must be, for communication to take place, some common understanding of the form and the symbols that are used. If you receive a message in Morse code but you do not know the code, no communication has taken place.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

When the communication is between men, then the words, syntax, and grammar must be commonly understood between them. This understanding is never exactly the same because our internal histories are never exactly the same; two people never experience exactly the same thing. It is fortunate that in common time we have enough similar experiences, and these are repreated often enough, to enable us to generalize "common understandings" out of our experiences. It is to the extent that we share common experiences that we are able to communicate more easily.³⁵

Thus, in the sense that communication must call upon the common experience of the sender and the receiver for communication to take place, so we will understand that the writers of the books of the New Testament called upon the common experience shared with the intended readers in their effort to communicate.

It is in Proposition 7 in his series of propositions concerning the function of the Bible in theological work that Ebeling defines the kind of thing that we have been speaking of:

Criticism is an integral element in the effort to understand the text. It is directed to that which the Biblical text wants to bring to understanding and *against* anything and everything that stands as a hindrance in the way of the hermeneutical function of the text.³⁶

Within the context of our intent then, communication of the Word of God is the common objective of the exegete and of the writer

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³⁶ Ebeling, *op. cit.*, p. 428

or writers of the documents. Hermeneutics is the attempt to relate this Word of God within the common external historical memory, first of the evangelist as he wrote for the people of his time and place; and, second of the modern exegete as he seeks to make that same word relevant to the world of the twentieth century.

First we must attempt to see how this is done by attempting to see how the biblical authors used their common external history to create the change in the internal history of their readers.

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF COMMON HISTORY

Barnabas Lindars has made an excellent study of the history of exegetical study in the New Testament as a means of understanding the forms that are found within it.¹ He has illustrated quite effectively the fact that the Christian writers used the common external history, *i.e.* the Old Testament, as a framework through which to support their claims for a radical readjustment of their internal histories. It was shown above that just such a pattern developed in the use of cultural forms which were adapted to the Christian message. We shall now show two of these forms and the uses to which they were put, in order to support the claim that it was through the common memory that the message was explained and understood.

It is within these two forms that Lindars sees a claim for special consideration in his hypothesis on *New Testament Apologetic*, and which affords an excellent illustration of our view that it was through the use of common history and common memory that the evangelists attempted communication. It is also contended here that these are excellent examples of Old Testament hermeneutic in which the authors sought to explain, translate, comment, and communicate the meaning of the external history in the light of a new experience which had created a new internal history.

¹ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 16-17.

These two forms have been called by Lindars the *Shift of Application* and the *Modification of Text*.² It is our intent to pursue these with him in an effort to follow his methodology and process.

A. SHIFT OF APPLICATION

Based upon the work of Dodd, one could say that it is probable that the early Church selected whole passages of the Old Testament for study, and that a definite rule of interpretation was used. Thus, we should expect that when a verse is quoted, its application should be closely related to the interpretation, and that this should be the same if it is quoted more than once. In fact, however, such is not the case. When the various applications of a given text are compared, it is sometimes possible to arrange them progressively. In this way, stages of interpretation can be discovered, corresponding to the developing thought and interest of the Church.

The first case in point is the use of Isaiah 6:9ff.: "Hear you indeed, but understand not; see you indeed, but perceive not." This is the classic example of a passage to account for the unbelief of the Jews. If we look at the material in Mark 4:10-13, we find an original saying built upon Isaiah 6:9 sandwiched between Marcan editorial matter that considerably alters the meaning of the original saying. The nucleus consists of verses 11f., a perfect expression of the doctrine of the *élite*. The mystery of the kingdom is given to the

²*Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

disciples, but to outsiders all things are in parables. The purpose is to sift the people, for (it is assumed) the elect perceive the mystery but the rejected are blind to it. If *en parabolais* represents faithfully the Hebrew form which it is used for in the Septuagint of Psalm 78:2, then the original saying was probably more general in intention, and it is Mark who has narrowed it down to parables in a technical sense.

Verses 10 and 13 are a typical expression of the disciples' inability to understand them, and, as Knox has pointed out, really amount to a refusal to give an interpretation.³

So vv. 11f. must be considered quite apart from the particular question of parables. They are concerned with belief in the message of Jesus, or rather the Church's claim about him. All the emphasis is thrown on the blindness of the outsiders.⁴

The passage is used to account for the unbelief of the Jews. Isaiah 6:9f. is in fact the classic passage to explain unbelief, and is frequently alluded to in the New Testament.

As the doctrine of the elite belongs to a secondary stage in the apologetic development, we must look elsewhere for the beginnings of the use of this testimony. It had already undergone development before it reached Mark.

The antiquity of its use may be deduced from the keyword πωρώ or πωρώσις. This is not found in the Septuagint version of this text, but occurs in the form cited in John 12:40. We find the word used in a way that evokes this testimony in Mark 3:5; 6:52; 8:17; Eph. 4:18 (all with καρδία); II Cor. 3:14 (with νοήματα); Rom. 11:7,25. For this reason it seems likely that John preserves one of the forms in which the text was current at an early time.⁵

³*Ibid.*, p. 159, citing W. L. Knox, *Sources of the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 36.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 159.

Mark 4:12

John 12:40

Acts 28:25-27

ἴνα βλέποντες
βλέπωσιν καὶ μὴ
ἴδωσιν,
καὶ ἀκούοντες
ἀκούσωσιν καὶ
μὴ συνιῶσιν

μήποτε

[John 9:39: ἴνα οἱ
μὴ βλέποντες βλεπωσιν.,]

τετύφλωκεν ἀυτῶν τοὺς
όφθαλμους
καὶ ἐπώρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν
καρδίαν,

ἀκοῇ
ἀκούσετε καὶ οὐ
μὴ σουθῆτε.

καὶ βλέποντες
βλέψετε
καὶ οὐ μὴ ἵδητε
ἐπαχυνθῇ γὰρ ἡ
καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ
τούτου
καὶ τοῖς ὥστιν αὐτῶν
βαρέως ἥκουσαν
καὶ τοὺς ὄφθαλμοὺς
αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν.
μήποτε ἴδωσιν
τοῖς ὄφθαλμοῖς
καὶ τοῖς ὥστιν
ακούσωσιν
καὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ
συνώσιν.
καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν
καὶ ἰασομαι αὐτούς⁶

ἐπιστρέψωσιν
καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς

καὶ νοήσωσιν
τῇ καρδίᾳ
καὶ στραφῶσιν
καὶ ἰασομαι αὐτούς

It will be seen that both Mark and John agree in mentioning the eyes first, spoiling the characteristic "chiasmus" structure of the original. All the words in Mark are derived from the Septuagint, except the final phrase. Lindars observes that he would be tempted to suppose that Mark has preserved the original ending which John has altered, but that there is no possible way of proving it. At any rate, the abbreviation of the text in both cases, and the unexpectedness of the endings, give a few significant facts from which the process of interpretation may be deduced.⁷

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁷ *Ibid.*

It is generally recognized that John has a style notable for its brevity, a sign of the desire to use it for one specific purpose. The inversion of the clauses and the omission of the phrases about hearing show an interest in the fundamental disposition to believe. First the text mentions the means of perception, then it goes behind it to the heart, which is the seat of intelligence and the will. In this way the text implies that, in spite of God's self-disclosure in Christ, the Jews were blinded by a fatal obstinacy, such as God always gives to the rebellious. It was this blindness that prevented them from accepting the salvation offered by God, so that they cut themselves off wilfully. This is an apologetic which is concerned with the response to the message of the Church in general.⁸

The next stage of development came when the Messianic claim had been pushed back to cover the ministry of Jesus. In this stage it answers a different objection. If the work of Jesus was genuinely Messianic, why was it not recognized as such? Of course the answer is that it was recognized, by those who had eyes to see.

This again might have been concerned with the ministry in general to begin with. But when John inserts it at 12:40, he narrows down the application still further. The proper conclusion was not drawn from the evidence of the healing miracle. It is at this point, the third stage of application, that the Septuagint form of the final phrase becomes ironically appropriate. It is thus possible that the words were adapted in this way only at this stage, replacing another form such as Mark.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Lindars found a similar case of progressive shift of application in the case of a companion testimony on unbelief (John 12:38 = Isaiah 53:1).¹⁰ The result of the finding was that the text gave a Scriptural explanation of how such a thing could happen. In our context it was the calling of a common memory, the use of external and internal histories, to give the divine stamp of approval to what the evangelist interpreted out of experience. Lindars says that this is significant in that both of the testimonies mentioned are alluded to by Paul in his argument on the rejection of the Jews in Romans 10:16 (Isaiah 53:1) and 11:7 (ἐπωρῶθησαν = Isaiah 6:10, John's version.)¹¹

In the first stage, when the application is to the lack of response to the Church's *kerygma*, the motive is practical. There is no suggestion of "vessels of wrath and vessels of honor." But when we see the second stage, when the situation is predicted of the ministry of Jesus, it necessarily implies the doctrine of the elect. "Those whose eyes were open could see all along that Jesus acted as the Messiah. The failure of many to believe, so far from being a count against the Church's later claims, was merely a wilful refusal on their part."¹²

Lindars claims that it is at this second stage that Isaiah 6:9f. has been used in the pre-Markan matter of Mark 4:11. Jesus's audience consisted of two classes of people (as constructed in the Marcan outline): those to whom the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

is given, and those to whom it remains an insoluble riddle. The work of inaugurating the kingdom in a mystery was deliberate and necessary on account of the innate rebelliousness of men's hearts, just as the blinding of their eyes was in the days of Isaiah.¹³

On the other hand, the final *απεθῆ αὐτοῖς* ("it should be forgiven them") of the Marcan form may well go back to the original use of the testimony in the early apologetic. This does accord with the basic Gospel message of the forgiveness of sins. It would have been strange that the Gospel of forgiveness should have been so easily refused, if God had not already revealed it through his prophet. Presumably, when Mark incorporated these verses into his parables section, he approximated the Scriptural words to the Septuagint as far as possible (this seemed to have been not only Mark's practice but also the practice of several of the Gospel writers), but, in the thinking of Lindars, felt that the last phrase was too different to be altered. It is perfectly suitable for his own use of the testimony for the question about parables.¹⁴

Mark also contains the verb *πωπόω*, which has survived in John's version of Isaiah 6:10, but not that of Mark. Mark 3:5 uses the noun *πωπωσίς* to express Jesus's displeasure at the rigidity of the Pharisees about the Sabbath. This may reflect something of the hostility toward the Church later on, which first called forth the use of this testimony. The verb appears in 6:52 and 8:17 and applied to the

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

disciples themselves. They are blind to the Messianic implications of the miracles of Jesus. It is possible, of course, that the doctrine of the *élite* had been challenged--not even the disciples themselves knew that Jesus was acting as the Messiah during his lifetime, or at least until the confession of Peter. This of course assumes that the confession of Peter actually took place and was not an eyewitness formula of confession of the evangelist. To this it must be replied, in the words of Lindars: "They too, shared the obtuseness of 'this generation,' until brought to repentance and belief. But this may be no more than the impression of Mark's method of presentation with its characteristic 'Messianic secret.'"¹⁵

At this point in the investigation Lindars points out that the passage in 8:17 is followed by words very similar to Isaiah 6:9, though in fact much closer to Jeremiah 5:21 and Ezekiel 12:2. He uses this to illustrate that there is the tendency of a well-established testimony to attract other related passages to cluster around it. It may be that his argument is sound and simply requires more investigation, but at the moment it is felt to be pressed and far from conclusive.¹⁶

It would also appear, as we follow with Lindars, that John's version seems to lie behind the allusions in II Corinthians 3:14, ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν, and 4:4 ὃ θεὸς τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἐτύφλωσεν τὰ νοήματα τῶν ἀπίστων. In this Epistle the question of unbelief has

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

been transferred to the Judaistic controversy. In Chapter III Paul is saying that the Jews were guilty of πάρωσις even in the time of Moses, and that this persists even now when they cling to the old Law. It is thus implied that the mystery which had now been made known to Christ was also made known to Moses, but the people failed to recognize it from the very start. Thus, in this context we find ourselves in a very different field of thought from that of the Gospels, whether Mark or John. Paul's argument is, in fact, characteristic of the Hellenistic element in early Christianity, and has much in common with the classic example in Stephen's speech (Acts 7). According to this, the failure of the Jews to recognize Jesus as the Christ was due to their failure to perceive the real meaning of the Law from the very beginning. Hence the unbelief of the Jews is a very strong argument against the Judaizers.¹⁷

The argument, however, is double-edged. Many of the Gentiles also fail to believe. In 4:4 Paul uses the same text with regard to the Gentiles. The unbelieving Gentiles are also blind, because they are under the domination of the "God of this aeon." Just as the Jews must be freed from the letter of the Law in order to perceive the truth revealed in Jesus, so the Gentiles must be freed in their turn from their own brand of spiritual bondage. This expression is dualistic and is probably the application of a late Jewish doctrine of two spirits in man. Lindars, however, sees these developments as Paul's

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

working on the primary use of Isaiah 6:9f., or with the problem of
 unbelief in the Gospel message as a whole.¹⁸

There are now two parallel but distinct developments. In the pre-Marcan unit of Mark 4:11f., and in John we have the kind of questioning likely to happen in Palestine, where memories of the impact of the personality of Jesus are still fairly clear, and the claims of the Church about him may be checked by enquiry. Paul's usage, on the other hand, reflects the situation which would arise in the course of missionary work, where there is likely to be a more pragmatic approach.¹⁹

What Lindars calls the doctrine of the *élite* should not be confused with the doctrine of the elect, which appears when Isaiah 6:9f. is referred to yet again in Romans 11:7,25. The doctrine of the *élite* only claims that unbelief on the part of some shows up the superiority of the privileged few, which turns the tables on those who say that unbelief is an objection to Christianity. The doctrine of the elect makes this a dogmatic theory: that the unbelief of many was actually necessary to the working out of redemption. For (it is argued) the old distinction between Jew and Gentile, which was the old

¹⁸ *Ibid.* In this portion of Lindars' study particular attention was given to the question of whether he would attempt to suggest any effort in Paul of moving the application backward to include the earthly ministry of Jesus; no such indication was found. The prime point in this portion of his study centered around the use of this passage and its tendency to lead to the doctrine of the *élite*, distinguishing between those who are blind and those who see.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

criterion of election, had to be abolished, so that a new line of demarcation might be drawn: that of believers and unbelievers, whether Jew or Gentile. The πώπωσις of the Jews at large is the reverse side of the idea of the faithful remnant, which is the positive aspect of the doctrine of the elect (Romans 11:7). After the verbal allusion to Isaiah 6:9f. (ἐπωρώθησαν), Paul adds closely similar Scriptural warrant in the form of a conflated adaption of Isaiah 29:10 and Deuteronomy 29:3 (vs. 8).²⁰

Lindars asserts that the evidence that Paul put deep thought to this question is seen from the method of the conflation that is used. This is not simply a matter of catchwords. There is evidence here of the magnitude of the work that must have accompanied these Epistles of Paul. He is deliberately seeking to call the common memory into focus to establish his point. The passage in Deuteronomy refers to the Israelites' inability to perceive the meaning of revelation given to Moses (this time not the Law, but the "signs and wonders" which accompanied the Exodus). Isaiah 29:10 occurs in a context much used in connection with the rejection of the Jews. The necessity of the blindness of the Jews until the evangelization of the Gentiles is complete is a thesis which is to be regarded as a Pauline development, taking the matter a stage further than he had in II Corinthians. It is succinctly summarized in Romans 11:25, where πώπωσις occurs.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

There still remains for consideration the full citation of Isaiah 6:9f. in Acts 28:26f. Although it is simple enough in itself, the way it is introduced shows some interesting cross-connections with the texts of rejection. From the literary point of view Luke has been saving up this quotation as the climax to the repeated theme that Paul was opposed by the Jews, but found a better hearing among the Gentiles.²¹ He has saved this text for the purpose, because it is by now the classic passage for the rejection of the Jews . . .

The quotation opens with the following phrase (vs. 25b): καλῶς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον ἐλάλησεν διὰ Ἡσαίου τοῦ προφήτου πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ὑμῶν λέγων. This bears close similarity to the way in which Mark has introduced another quotation which is very relevant to the same issue (Mark 7:6): καλῶς ἐπροφητεύσεν Ἡσαΐας περὶ ὑμῶν . . . ὡς γέγραπται . . . The quotation that follows is Isaiah 29:13, following the Septuagint, which differs importantly from the Hebrew: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."²²

There are three things to be observed here. In the first place it is clear that the argument of the whole passage turns on the Septuagint form of the text. The consequence of this, says Lindars, "is that the citation cannot be part of the genuine Gospel tradition."²³ It is probable that Jesus's indictment of the Scribes and Pharisees was valued by the Church for use in the Judaistic controversy, and the quotation may have been added to it in the course of it.²⁴

So it is not surprising to find an allusion to Isaiah 29:13 for this purpose in Col. 2:22.²⁴

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165. Lindars cites here an article by J. Dupont, "Le Salut des Gentils et la signification théologique du Livre des Actes," *New Testament Studies*, VI (1960), 132-155.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

The second point is that although the verse differs from Isaiah 6:9f., it belongs to the same polemic. We have already seen this in the use of Isaiah 29:10 in Romans 11:8.²⁵

The third point which Lindars makes is that it is not without significance that this is a section of the Marcan Gospel which Luke has omitted from his material in the Gospel. Several instances of his use of material omitted from the Gospel are to be found in the composition of Acts. Lindars feels that this is one of those cases. The similarity between Acts 28:25b and Mark 7:6a is thus not accidental. Lindars contends that Luke omitted the large portion of Mark (6:45-8:26), presumably because it contains a great deal of duplication (the feeding of the multitude, for example). He maintains, however, that Luke saw the point of the Marcan narrative. It is dominated by the hardened blindness of both the Scribes and Pharisees, and the disciples themselves. It ends with the healing of a blind man. Then, where Luke takes up the Marcan narrative once more, the disciples' eyes are opened, and Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8:29 = Luke 9:20). Luke saves this for the end of Acts. Here we find Paul giving a similar indictment against the Jews. The classic text of blindness is quoted. It is left to the reader to open his eyes and confess that Jesus is the Christ.²⁶

As has been evident, the discussion by Lindars of the use of Isaiah 6:9f. was of necessity extensive. The original purpose was to

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

explain why Jews failed to accept the Christian message. This was followed by two parallel developments. On the one hand, it was used to explain why the earthly ministry of Jesus was not universally perceived to be Messianic. This usage left traces in the Gospel tradition. In John the application is narrowed down to the significance of the healing miracles. In Mark it is extended to the response of the disciples as well as of unbelievers. On the other hand, it also had special usefulness in the expansion of Christianity as a weapon to justify preaching to Gentiles rather than Jews. Paul takes it a step further by using it both to rebut the claims of the Judaizers and to explain a failure of response on the part of the Gentiles. Then, as this controversy gradually was settled and passed out of mind, it was the anti-Judaic application which finally found its way into the patristic tradition. The beginnings of this are to be seen in the last chapter of Acts.

All these are of course concerned with response. But none of them is quite the same, and from the point of view of apologetic, the Marcan example has strayed into an entirely different field. It is doubtful whether the use of parables was a real difficulty to those who actually listened to Jesus as he taught. It is only later, when their context is lost and they are remembered as isolated units, that the Church is both perplexed and embarrassed by the traditional teaching of its founder. Then, for apologetic reasons, it becomes necessary to formulate a theory that the teaching was deliberately given in an intentionally obscure form, and scriptural warrant is adduced in support of it. But the use of the Isaiah text in John is concerned with a problem which is liable to arise at a much earlier stage, the reason why the teaching of Jesus did not compel belief. It thus seems reasonable to arrange the uses of this quotation in order of development from the basic idea contained in the passage from which it is taken. This is first the problem of the

hardness of heart which prevented many from believing the Gospel, then the need to explain the rejection of the Jews in favor of Gentile audiences, and finally the perplexity caused by the presence of unexplained parables in the traditional body of teachings.²⁷

The example above is especially instructive because the sequence of interpretation is the direct opposite of the presumed order in which the books themselves were written. John preserves the oldest application, Acts the second, and Mark the latest! This does not mean that our estimates of the dates when these books were written must now be radically revised, but it does caution us not to evaluate a book by its date alone, for a later book may preserve more primitive ideas. The shift of application shows the logical sequence in the development of thought.

This shift of application is likely to take place with the quotations that have become generally accepted in Christian thought and speech. It is a sure sign that an important issue has been at stake in the primitive period, even though the battle has been fought and won (or lost), and the original point of using the text has been largely forgotten.

The purpose of this kind of form-critical study is that it enables us to ask pertinent questions of the primitive Church that until now have been unanswerable. As the work of Dodd has shown, it is highly unlikely that this usage is the result of the same texts being used independently by so many authors. It seems more reasonable to assume that a text is used because it is already in the memory through

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

familiarity with the text and its relationship with the *kerygma*. The key passages considered *in extenso* are the starting point of Christian exegesis. They are chosen because they appear relevant to the situation in hand; that is, to some item in the proclamation of the Christian message. There is no doubt that these were used rather loosely in general or in vague terms, for this would be enough for ordinary preaching. But if the Church's interpretation is contested by the scholars of the synagogue, then more exact reference must be made. It would be for this reason that the Jews of the synagogue at Beroea "examined the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so (Acts 17:11)."

It seems likely that the Old Testament quotations belong primarily to the apologetic element in early preaching. The key passages have given some general theological positions, and from them specific quotations bring the point to bear on particular issues. In other words, these passages are an armoury, from which the appropriate weapon may be selected to be trained onto the target. But this is no arbitrary digging out of proof-texts, without taking the context into account. On the contrary, the context with its Christian interpretation has already defined the meaning of them. It is with this definite meaning that they are found to be useful at a particular stage in argument or discussion.²⁸

On the basis of this reasoning it then becomes legitimate to ask the question: What is the original apologetic purpose of any given testimony? Presumably it answers some objection to the primitive *kerygma*, even if the New Testament application of it appears to be concerned with something quite different. By asking this question our study can advance the limits of those quotations that occur more than

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

once to include those that are cited only once. In this case the shift of application is seen by comparing the actual use of the quotations with the original usage inferred from the Old Testament context interpreted in relation to the basic *kerygma*.

The value of pursuing such a study is two-fold. First, it gives us the advantage of seeking for those items which were a part of the common memory and whose use would draw forth the validations contained in that memory. Second, it presents the possibility of opening dialogue with the primitive Church, for as Lindars has shown, the questions, the concerns, the problems, and the faith of the early Christians may be found in the answers they gave to their detractors.

B. MODIFICATION OF TEXT

When the history of the use of given texts is traced through the Gospels, and even into the later patristic writers, it is interesting to note that the text has undergone modification which adapts its use to the intent of the writer. One of the more interesting examples of this is found in the tracing of Isaiah 52:5.

In tracing the history of the use of Isaiah 52:5 we were struck by the fact that it is quoted several times with non-canonical opening words. It is possible that this is to be ascribed to its inclusion in a series of Woes against the unbelieving Jews. This means that the form of the text is a relic of the more original interpretation, which has nevertheless been discarded by the writers who quote the text in this form.²⁹

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

In Romans 2:24 Paul quotes Isaiah 52:5, "And my name continually all the day is blasphemed." In the original context the quotation relates to the fact that it appears that God is powerless to save his own people; it is in the coming deliverance that the dishonor to God's name will be removed. The Christian understands this to mean that the deliverance has now taken place in the resurrection of Christ. He also understands it to mean that blasphemy only continues where the Jews persist in unbelief. This is the expected application of the text. The use made of it by Paul is different. "It is the Jews' failure to keep the Law which causes the scandal, rather than God's failure to act." Paul refers to Judaism before the work of Christ, to those who still refuse to believe now, and also to the Judaizers. The scandal could have been removed if the Jews had heeded how God has in fact taken away the dishonor to his name. Note that a shift of application has in fact taken place in accordance with the change in circumstances. In the Christ event the evidence is present that the cause of blasphemy is no longer God's inaction; he has acted. The blasphemy results from the fact that the Jews continue to behave as if he still had not acted.³⁰

A further shift takes place when the text is used in a wholly Christian context. Then it is applied to the scandal of heresy (II Peter 2:2) or the scandal of low moral standards among the Christians (I Timothy 6:1 and Titus 2:5).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

The use of the text has been modified by the change in the experience of the early Christians. What has been a part of the common memory in the explanation of why the affairs of the world, and particularly Judaism, continued as they were was now reinterpreted to give meaning to the experience which had become part of their internal history and to explain why others did not find the same life-changing value.

This is an example of the way in which the previous history of a quotation may be discovered by noticing the variations in the form of the text . . . Such variations very often constitute part of the *midrash pesher* itself, so that, in addition to the caprice or inaccuracy of the writer, a conscious and deliberate motive on his part may be present. In certain extreme instances layers of successive interpretative modifications may be uncovered, rather like archaeological excavations.³¹

A very excellent example of this is shown by Stendahl. He has traced a process of exegesis in which two versions of Zechariah 11:13 have been worked over and combined with words from Jeremiah 18:1 and 32:6-9. He correctly shows that the texts are brought into line with what actually happened when the high priest received the money from Judas. He contends that through this method of the using the *pesher* in Matthew 27:9, the author or authors have made the words fit the facts rather than making the facts fit the words as is usually assumed.³²

When the text is viewed in this manner, and seen from the light of the primitive apologetic, it becomes possible to see a change

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

³² Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1954), pp. 196-198.

in motive at each stage of the textual history. Lindars points out that this passage indicates a change in interest from the fact that Jesus was sold for money to the story of the fate of Judas. Of course, these are quite separate issues. In the first case it is part of the scandal of the Cross and carries with it the desire to show that what was done to Jesus in no way conflicts with the Church's claim that he is the expected Messiah. In the latter case it is a more subtle criticism that draws the attention of the evangelist. It is aimed at the criticism that would throw doubt on the Messiahship of Jesus by showing up his ignorance and folly in including Judas in the number of the

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Twelve.

In our examination of the Passion Psalms we observed that the fate of Judas is a special element of the Passion apologetic. Although the importance of the issue belongs to a comparatively early phase of the Church's history, it is secondary from the point of view of logical sequence. Pss. 69 and 109, which are concerned with it, had a prior use in connection with the Passion of Jesus. It will now be argued that this is also true of the original use of Zech. 11:13, which is the basis of the legend of the fate of Judas, and the kernel of the most elaborate product ³⁴ of the Church's *midrash pesher* to be found in the New Testament.

As we undertake the task of unraveling the complex narrative and quotation in Matthew 27:3-10 we must first take notice of the fact that Matthew has already made allusion to Zechariah 11:12 (ἔστησαν . . . τριάκοντα ἀργύρια) at 26:15. This is the Matthean rewriting of the Marcan story in 14:11 that Judas betrayed Jesus for a sum of money. It seems evident that Matthew has been prompted to do this by his

³³ Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Judas *pericope*, which contains the Zechariah quotations that will be used later in his narrative. It does reveal the starting-point of the complex: the need to explain why Jesus was sold for money. The apparent contention on the part of the Jews that prompted the need for explanation was the view that if Jesus had been the Messiah he would never have made such a drastic mistake in judgment. This of course can be counteracted by the use of Zechariah 11:12f. which shows that it was pre-ordained in prophecy.³⁵

A secondary argument is inherent in this defense of the Messiahship of Jesus. It shows that even though Jesus was sold for money, God showed his innocence by the fate of the recipient of it. "The money is 'the price of blood,' and the sudden death of Judas is the result of the divine displeasure at the condemnation of the Chosen of God." The money, to all appearances, was used to buy a piece of land called the "Field of Blood," probably because of its use as a cemetery. The actual name of the field proclaims the divine judgment on the traitor and no further argument is needed to prove that the behavior of Judas is no count against the Church's claims about Jesus.³⁶

Although there is considerable variance between this story and the story in Acts, there are agreements that are worth noting. They agree in the suddenness of the death of Judas, the purchase of the land with the money, and the name of the plot of land. These three facts are all that need be held as the nucleus of the legend, the rest

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

of the story being deduced from them.³⁷

The idea that Judas had himself bought the field is a perfectly natural assumption. The description of the sudden death depends on the meaning of the name, *i.e.*, the Field of Blood. The note that it was this occasion which first made people adopt this name for the land is due to the desire to get the most out of the few known facts. The whole legend is 'an aetiological story around the name.'³⁸

Both Lindars and Stendahl proceed to analyze the text and its variants in such a manner as to show that the development of the legend contains a growing interest in the fate of Judas quite apart from the necessity of explaining his part in the Passion.

The quotation of Zech. 11:13, which at first was culled from the Zechariah Passion prophecy to account for the particular point of the betrayal for money, now becomes the centre of another form of the legend. It is possible to trace successive stages in the correlation between what was known (or supposed) to have happened and scriptural testimony. These stages coincide with changes in language. The text is first studied in the original Hebrew, then a Palestinian Greek recension is used, and finally it is brought into line with standard Septuagint texts. We shall see this happening both in the narrative of Matt. 27:3-8, where Matthew is writing up older material, and also in the composite quotation in vv. 9f. The analysis will also explain the false attribution of the quotation to Jeremiah.³⁹

The reason for these elaborations of textual work is the desire on the part of the Church to show that every detail of the known history of Judas was prefigured in Scripture, so that the whole falls into the divine plan. The final phrase falls into this plan in a vitally important way. It is the complete answer to the problem of

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, citing Stendahl, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

³⁹ Lindars, *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Judas Iscariot. An additonal point worth mentioning in this connection is that in the Fourth Gospel the author finds it necessary to combat any suggestion that Jesus did not see into the mind of Judas from the beginning (John 6:70f.; 13:18-27).

The developments which we have traced not only coincide with changes of language, but also show different hermeneutical methods. The original choice of a particular passage from the Passion prophecy of Zechariah (the Hebrew stage) is a straight-forward matter. The cryptic character of the prophecy makes it easy to believe that the Passion of Jesus is precisely what it refers to. The second (Palestinian Greek) stage is concerned with the correlation of the details of the passage and the known facts about the fate of Judas. The method at this stage is to draw out the fullest implications of the text itself. The final exegete (using the Septuagint, but paying careful attention to the original Hebrew) introduces an allegorical element by seeing an equivalence, a mysterious identity, of Zechariah's prophecy and Jeremiah's transaction--not to mention the plague of boils. There is still a fourth stage. Matthew himself disregards the work of the final exegete, because he is only interested in the *pesher* text and its commentary from the point of view of his narrative. It is the second layer of exegesis which provides him with the information which he wants.⁴⁰

The next question that must be asked is "How much of the narrative in Matthew 27:3-8 can be accepted as accurate?" The analysis which has been reviewed has suggested that the only fixed points in the tradition that we have evidence for are the sudden death of Judas, the purchase of the field, and the name "Field of Blood." Lindars points out that if a choice between Acts and Matthew has to be made, "We are bound to feel that the suicide of Judas, after returning the money to the priests, is intrinsically more profitable." The motive of remorse is acceptable psychologically.⁴¹ It is also probable that the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121-122.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

decision by the priests to buy land is also to be regarded as founded on fact, and again the motive is credible. Stendahl sees the field as being an actual "potter's field."⁴²

. . . there is no reason to suppose that the land had not always been called the Field of Blood. The name is not derived from the death of Judas (Acts), nor from its subsequent use for the burial of foreign visitors (Matthew). Presumably it was already a burial-ground, though in private hands before this date. Thus Matt. 27:8 shares with Acts 1:19 the aetiological motive. It may be deduced from the way in which the whole material is handled that though the story is not created out of the text, the text may be used freely to fill up the gaps in the story. This seems to the early Christian exegete a perfectly legitimate hermeneutical procedure.⁴³

Three factors must be taken into account when we estimate the value of modification of text. These are: deliberate alteration, selection of reading, and memory-quotation. The first of these offers the greatest possibilities for the determination of apologetic and/or hermeneutic. Such alterations are to be regarded as interpretive readings, comparable to the Targums. One text interprets another, and the formation that follows is a conflated text. In the view of the biblical exegete this was a perfectly legitimate treatment of the text, because it was felt that the real meaning of the Scripture was clarified by such a procedure. This is validated by the understanding of the Church that what God has done in Christ is the key to the understanding of all the Scriptures.⁴⁴

⁴² Stendahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-198.

⁴³ Lindars, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

The second factor, which may seem more legitimate to the modern reader, is the selection of readings. This, it should be noted, would be done with the same intent as the previous modification through deliberate alteration. Caution must be observed at this point, however, as it is possible that the writer may not have known any other reading and thus, unless textual evidence points to the contrary, may have had no special motive in mind.⁴⁵

The third group reduces the significance. An error due to the fickleness of memory can only be given weight if the factor predisposing the author to make the mistake can be found and demonstrated.⁴⁶

We must conclude that this method will not stand alone, but requires the corroboration of the *rule of interpretation* and the *shift of application*. In other words, if the form of the text points to an interpretation in terms of the Church's claim that Jesus is the Messiah, or to one of the related items of the *kerygma*, it can be given the attention due to a deliberate modification of the text. It gains greatly in significance if the shift of application has taken place, the quotation being concerned with a derivative issue, so that the writer appears to be unaware of the implications of the form of the text he is using.⁴⁷

Even with the three factors listed above it can be seen that modification of text may be used as an indicator in evaluating the quotations, in spite of the uncertainty surrounding the problem of the Greek texts used by the New Testament writers. As has been indicated above, the question that must be asked is "What was the objection to the primitive *kerygma* which the testimony, taken in its context, was designed to meet?" Very often the modification of text will be the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

deciding factor in determining the answer to this question.⁴⁸

It would be folly to assume that the Church used any of these texts simply to fill the story. It was the call by the writer to the element of common memory that would validate the claims which the Church made for Jesus and for the Church itself. This call on the common memory was motivated by theological concerns, and by questions which were being raised about the Church and the *kerygma* it preached. Some of these questions were raised by those outside of the Church and the answers, that is, the call upon the common memory, was given in the form of apologetic; the defense of, or statement for, the experience that had altered their view of history. Some were raised by those who had responded to the proclamation and now sought validity in the external history. This call upon the common memory was given in the form of hermeneutic; the interpretation of the external history. For the Jew this meant the history of the Acts of God in Israel, and for the Gentile it meant speaking within the common memory which held meaning and significance to their understanding of existence. It was the endeavor to interpret the life, teaching, and person of Jesus, in the light of the event called the resurrection, and within the framework of history.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VII

APOLOGETIC AND HERMENEUTIC IN ACTION

A. KERYGMA

No single word has burst upon the field of biblical scholarship with the impact and general acceptance as has this word "kerygma." Since the publication of *The Apostolic Preaching*, thirty-five years ago, this word has captured the church. "In a day of theological, social, and technical revolution it has come to stand for the core of the Christian faith."¹ Proceeding from the various suggestions of German form critics, Dodd pieced together fragments from the various books and chapters of Pauline writings to form what he called the "kerygma." It was the outline of what he felt represented the earliest Christian missionary preaching. He was convinced that Paul's kerygma represented a special branch of the primitive outline but nevertheless was a derivative from the main, central tradition. This main, central tradition he found in the book of Acts, particularly in the speeches attributed to Paul, Peter and others. He was aware of the relatively late date that most scholars ascribe to the document but was convinced that the writer of Luke-Acts maintained faithfully, as a historian, the integrity of the original material. The work thus described was

¹R. C. Worley, *Preaching and Teaching in the Earliest Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 27.

favorably received because it was able to account for the marked similarities that New Testament scholarship noted between the various writings in their form-critical studies.²

The basic argument that has developed against the total acceptance of Dodd's theory lies in his complete separation of preaching (*kerygma*) and teaching (*didachē*). It is felt that Dodd makes too fine a distinction and that in reality it was a pluralistic approach determined by the location and situation that was needed to be met at the time.³

On the basis of this study I concluded that teaching and preaching in the earliest Christian community were the same activities and had the same content in many instances. Also, the activities of preaching and teaching and the content communicated in these activities were referred to and described by words other than "preaching" and "teaching." There appears to be a group of words that refer to the same or similar activities and content in the earliest church. There is ambiguity and overlapping in the use of words to describe the content and activities. This may have been the actual condition in the earliest church.⁴

What should attract our attention is not destroyed in the argument over the inclusiveness of *kerygma* as a practice. It is in its broader aspect as the content of the basic proclamation that is of interest to us here. If we are concerned with the proposition that the evangelists saw their hermeneutical task as the reinterpretation of the basic Jewish faith in terms of the coming of Jesus, his work, teaching,

²C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936), p. 16.

³Worley, *op. cit.*, pp. 30ff.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 86.

and his person, then it would follow that the kerygma would contain those elements that would call to mind the common memory of the Judaic faith.

It is, in fact, just this kind of call that is issued through the kerygma as defined by Dodd. In I Corinthians 15:1-11 we find a most important witness.

And now, my brothers, I must remind you of the gospel that I preached to you; the gospel which you received, on which you have taken your stand, and which is now bringing you salvation. Do you still hold fast the Gospel as I preached it to you? If not, your conversion was in vain.

First and foremost, I handed on to you the facts which had been imparted to me: that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised to life on the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, and afterwards to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred of our brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the apostles.

In the end he appeared even to me; though this birth of mine was monstrous, for I had persecuted the church of God and am therefore inferior to all other apostles--indeed not fit to be called an apostle. However, by God's grace I am what I am, nor has his grace been given to me in vain; on the contrary, in my labours I have outdone them all--not I, indeed, but the grace of God working with me. But what matter, I or they? This is what we all proclaim, and this is what you believed.⁵

The things of first importance are shared with others as a common faith. Paul describes this in terms of a technical nature to describe the acceptance and transmission of tradition ("handed on"; "were imparted to").

Romans 1:1-5 has been said by scholars to contain an incipient creed or confession of faith which goes beyond Paul to the primitive

⁵ W. D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 52.

Church; a confession that he shared with all Christians. Davies suggests that it is "an almost unconscious recital of a formula for the faith."⁶

From Paul, servant of Christ Jesus, apostle by God's call, set apart for the service of the Gospel.

This gospel God announced beforehand in sacred scriptures through his prophets. It is about his Son: on the human level he was born of David's stock, but on the level of the spirit--the Holy Spirit--he was declared Son of God by a mighty act in that he rose from the dead: it is about Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him I received the privilege of a commission in his name to lead to faith and obedience men in all nations.⁷

What appears in Paul also emerges in Acts, where the preaching of the earliest Christians is purported to be preserved. Whether the author has preserved them in the form of the original or authentic speeches of Peter, Paul, and others is not of importance to us here, although it is the opinion of this writer that the speeches are theological constructs. What is of importance is that we have preserved in these documents the concerns and arguments of part of the primitive Church in its efforts to interpret the experience of Jesus. It does tell us how the Church sought to explain the things that had happened in their time and to call upon the common memory to justify its interpretation and claims.

In Acts 2:14-36 we read:

But Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and addressed them: "Fellow Jews, and all you who live in Jerusalem, mark this and give me a hearing. These men are not drunk, as you imagine; for it is only nine in the morning. No, this is what the prophet spoke of: 'God says, "This will happen in the

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

last days: I will pour out upon everyone a portion of my spirit; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Yes, I will endue even my slaves, both men and women, with a portion of my spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the sky above, and signs on the earth below--blood and fire and drifting smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before that great, resplendent day, the day of the Lord, shall come. And then, everyone who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Men of Israel, listen to me: I speak of Jesus of Nazareth, a man singled out by God and made known to you through miracles, portents, and signs, which God worked among you through him, as you well know. When he had been given up to you, by the deliberate will and plan of God, you used heathen men to crucify and kill him. But God raised him to life again, setting him free from the pangs of death, because it could not be that death should keep him in its grip.

"For David says of him:

'I foresaw that the presence of the Lord would be with me always,
For he is at my right hand so that I may not be shaken;
Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue spoke my joy;
Moreover, my flesh shall dwell in hope,
For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,
Nor let thy loyal servant suffer corruption.
Thou hast shown me the ways of life,
Thou wilt fill me with gladness by thy presence.'

"Let me tell you plainly, my friends, that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this very day. It is clear therefore that he spoke as a prophet who knew that God had sworn to him that one of his own descendants should sit on his throne; and when he said that he was not abandoned to Hades, and his flesh never suffered corruption, he spoke with foreknowledge of the resurrection of the Messiah. The Jesus we speak of has been raised by God, as we can all bear witness. Exalted thus with God's right hand, he received the Holy Spirit from the Father, as was promised, and all that you now see and hear flows from him. For it was not David who went up to heaven; his own words are: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."'⁸ Let all Israel then accept as certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

This recital of preaching follows upon a declaration that the coming of the Spirit heralds the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28-32,⁹ this is attested to in the works, wonders, and signs during the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These same themes appear, with minor variations, in Acts 2:38, Acts 3:12-26, 4:8-12, and again in 10:34-43. The early preaching is associated with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and this with the fulfillment of prophecy.¹⁰

In I Peter we find the same basic theme. Again with variations. I Peter 1:10-12 says:

This salvation was the theme which the prophets pondered and explored, those who prophesied about the grace of God awaiting you. They tried to find out what was the time, and what the circumstances, to which the spirit of Christ in them pointed, foretelling the sufferings in store for Christ and the splendours to follow; and it was disclosed to them that the matter they treated of was not for their time but for yours. And now it has been openly announced to you through the preachers who brought you the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. These are things that angels long to see into.¹¹

The preaching of Christians is asserted to be connected to the activity of the Old Testament prophets. It is in the latter that the sufferings of Christ had been testified to beforehand. The explanation was that the same Spirit that was active in the Christian preachers, and Christians in general, had been active in the prophets before them.¹²

In II Peter 1:18-21 the same kind of conviction is brought

⁹ We shall deal with this question in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁰ Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹² *Ibid.*

forth in the form of a creedal formulation. The elements of Christian preaching which have been referred to above are asserted clearly and positively.

This voice from heaven we ourselves heard; when it came, we were with him on the sacred mountain.

All this only confirms for us the message of the prophets, to which you will do well to attend, because it is like a lamp shining in a murky place, until the day breaks and the morning star rises to illuminate your minds.

But first note this: no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself. For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but, impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God.¹³

It might first be noted in the above the content of divine inspiration, not only for the prophecy itself, but also, of the interpretation. This suggests a theory of exegesis similar to that outlined in Chapter III above. The interpretation requires the same indwelling of the Holy Spirit as that given to the prophet.

In the work of Dodd the kerygma was outlined as containing the outline of the earliest Christian proclamation. This proclamation was the one referred to and used by Paul and other preachers as the "factual core," "given data" without which there could be no Gospel. This "core" contained the basic elements of those passages outlined above.

The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ.

He was born of the seed of David.

He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age.

He was buried.

¹³*Ibid.*

He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.
 He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and
 Lord of the quick and the dead.
 He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men.¹⁴

While there seems to be disagreement on the part of critical scholars as to the presence of some of these items in the primitive preaching there is at least fairly general concensus that this formed the nucleus by the time of the New Testament writings. Convincing argument has been presented by Lindars¹⁵ that the Davidic descent and the elevation to the right hand of God may be later developments written to answer, as we have said above, specific arguments against the kerygma.

For the purposes of this study, it will be argued that the speech of Peter which was quoted above was used as an apologetic of the early church, and that in Second Corinthians we find an excellent example of the kerygma used as New Testament hermeneutic. What will be argued is that both of these are attempts to prove that the change that has taken place in the internal history of the particular writer is the direct result of the Christ event and the fulfillment of the prophecy contained in external history.

B. APOLOGETIC

As will be readily noted in the quotation of the speech of

¹⁴ Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁵ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 189ff.

Peter from Acts 2, there is a definite structure that is evident even to the untrained eye. It begins with the explanation of the event that has been described in the preceding verses (Pentecost) and attributes this experience to the fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:28-32.

The second part of the speech is easily distinguished from the first. There is a new start, a new appeal, made in verse 22. An appeal is made to the hearers which is only superficially similar to that made in verse 29. In fact it has no relation to the preceding quotation from Joel, whereas verse 29 begins the exposition of Psalm 16. This break is accompanied by a real difference in subject matter.¹⁶

The third part, which comes after a pause in which there is a brief commentary on the response of the audience, is to be taken closely with the material of the first part, primarily because there is an integral connection of the quotation material.

The quotation in the first part stops short after the first line of the last verse of a paragraph that seems to be complete in itself. Some at least of the missing words appear in Acts 2:39, conflated with words from Isa. 57:19. So we have πᾶσιν τοῖς εἰς μακρὰν (cf. Isa. 57:19: τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ τοῖς ἐγγὺς οὖσιν) ὅσους ἀν προσκαλέσηται κύριος (cf. Joel 2:32: οὓς κύριος προσκέψηται). . . . These facts may be explained on the theory that Luke is joining together two separate speeches, a 'Pentecost speech' (parts [a] and [c]) with a 'Resurrection speech' dovetailed into it. This would imply the combination of two written sources. But it is not necessary to suppose this. His sources may just as well have been two different ranges of scriptural material, *Joel 2:28-32 and its commentary*, and *Ps. 16:8-11 and its commentary*. We have to imagine something like

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

the commentaries discovered at Qumran, consisting of text and comment after each verse, or group of verses.¹⁷ The break in the Joel citation may be a sign that a comment was inserted here.¹⁸

Lindars argues successfully that the latter alternative should be accepted.¹⁹ This means that we have two major quotations, each with its commentary, and therefore each with its own exegetical history. It has been shown in his argument that both are the end of a process of some complexity, though in the case of Psalm 16 the primitive argument from literal fulfillment has been preserved.

In the 'Pentecost speech' the author applied Joel 2:28-32 to the outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost. It is in effect, as we noted above, a prophetical explanation of the event that has just been described. Lindars argues that this cannot be primitive.

. . . for it implies that right from the very beginning the Christians were able to plot the precise place of the events in which they were involved in a definite eschatological pattern. It is intrinsically probable that the passage should be used in a much more general way to begin with. It is one of many eschatological passages used by the early Christians in the course of time, to support their claim to be living in the Last Days and to possess the Spirit.²⁰

A second stage of the use of this prophecy is the use to justify the Church's mission to the Gentiles. On the basis of the general fulfillment of the whole passage, the final verse, which

¹⁷ Lindars comments in a footnote: "We are not here postulating the existence of commentaries of this kind in the primitive Church, none of which have survived. The evidence only suggests an accumulating stock of related texts with occasional explanatory remarks, which may have been oral rather than written for the most part."

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38ff. ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

speaks of universal salvation, can receive this particular application. Romans 10:13 quotes Joel 2:32 in precisely this way. Lindars goes on to show that this is only one of a number of eschatological passages which have been given this special application. These passages come notably from Deutero-Isaiah. This is an application that would be particularly elaborated on in a Greek setting, for it takes advantage of the universalizing tendency of the Septuagint version of these prophecies.²¹

These facts lead us to expect that Joel 2:32 might well have a comment on it in terms of a Deutero-Isaiah passage. This is precisely what we find in Acts 2:39. The comment is Isa. 57:19, perhaps the most appropriate of all texts for the preaching to the Gentiles. It is used for this purpose with great effect in Eph. 2:13f., 17.²²

In the Lucan handling of this material we see that his context requires that this universal application be restricted to the Diaspora Jews and the proselytes of Acts 2:9-11. This change is due to the needs of the composition. What is probably the most important change that we note is the change from the general experience of the Spirit in the Last Days to the particular event on the Day of Pentecost. Lindars points out that while it looks like, and to a limited extent is, an example of literal fulfillment, it depends on Luke's own typological understanding of this episode as a special event in the post-Resurrection series.²³

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²³ *Ibid.*

In a brilliant analysis of Peter's Pentecost speech in Acts 2, Lindars shows that its present structure reveals a combination of two different Old Testament passages, each accompanied by the Christian *pesher* on it: Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:14-21; 38f.) and Ps. 16:8-11 (Acts 2:22-36). The Christian *pesher* on Psalm 16, like the *pesharim* from Qumran, uses both that Psalm itself and also other Old Testament passages in its interpretation, in this instance particularly Ps. 110:1, and Lindars offers a detailed, and completely convincing, analysis of Acts 2:22-36 and the early Christian exegesis which underlies it.²⁴ The point which concerns us here is that he is able to go on to show that the argument in the pericope Mark 12:35-37 turns upon a claim that 'Lord' is either inconsistent with, or greatly superior to, 'son of David.' But such a claim depends upon the argument of Acts 2:34 ('For David did not ascent into the heavens; but he himself says, "the Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand . . .''''). 'Viewed in this light,' concludes Lindars, quite correctly, 'the whole pericope is evidently derived from the exegesis preserved in Acts 2.'²⁵ In other words, the pericope about David's son is a 'historicization' of an early Christian exegetical tradition and a product of the early Church; it is not a historical reminiscence of the ministry of Jesus.²⁶

In effect what Lindars is asserting is that the rule of interpretation can be effectively applied to this passage; that it is designed to meet the test of replying to objections to the basic kerygma by the Church's enemies. It comes out of the attempt to understand and defend a given fact from within a living experience.

It is clear that Jesus himself refused to fit into preconceived or systematic messianic ideas; the difficulty is to be sure that he was ever claiming to be the Messiah at all. The apostles were convinced of it, but only after he had arisen from the dead. They then took their stand in direct opposition to the decision of the Jewish and Imperial authorities. Their

²⁴ Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 23-24, citing Lindars, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-38.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, citing pp. 38-45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

claim was bound to be subjected to every kind of test . . . But right from the beginning this faith had to be refined and articulated by the process of meeting the objections of the Church's enemies.²⁷

What was denied by the opponents of the Church was proclaimed by the evangelists. That even though Jesus did not fit the Messianic idea of the opponents, the resurrection proved that he was the true Messiah, that this was attested to by the Scriptures themselves, and that the Church was a continuation of his kingdom which was shown by the gift of the Spirit which was also forecast in the Prophets. The kerygma and its commentary were used to defend the claim of the Church that they were indeed the "people of the end-time."

C. HERMENEUTIC

Robert Funk has pointed out that in II Corinthians we have an excellent example of the use of hermeneutics in the New Testament. It is within these documents that we see the effort of Paul to grapple with the Corinthian heresy and are thus given a "grandstand seat" in observing his hermeneutic at work.

One could even say that the Corinthian correspondence provides the battleground for the current theological debate. It is worth noting that H. Schlier identifies the pneumatic theology of heretical Corinthians with modern existentialist theology.²⁸ This leads to the observation that Paul may have been trapped by his predilection to criticize from within

²⁷ Lindars, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

²⁸ Robert W. Funk, "The Hermeneutical Problem and Historical Criticism," in J. M. Robinson, *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 167, citing J. M. Robinson, "Basic Shifts in German Theology," *Interpretation*, XVI (1962), 87.

rather than from without, and further that the orthodox way out was to reject not only false implications but also the whole context and language of a theological position. The debate thus has potentially farreaching implications for theology as a whole. Thus far, however, the discussion does not seem to have come to grips with the central issue, which is whether Paul could meet the Corinthians on their ground and still remain true to the kerygma, or, as I would prefer to put it, whether he could remain true to the kerygma and not meet them on their ground.²⁹

In II Corinthians 2:14-7:4 (omitting 6:14-7:1) and 10:1-13:13 Paul is giving expression to the word of reconciliation (5:19) as it determines his work as apostle. The theme is continued from a different perspective in 1:1-2:13; 7:5-16. Paul's sentences are set within the context of a serious challenge to his legitimacy as an apostle, "which Paul rightly views as a challenge also to his status as a Christian." His defense is evidenced in the development of the argument in 2:14-7:4 and 10:1-13:13.

If the Corinthians understood what it means to be reconciled to God in Christ, to be a new creation in him (5:16ff.), they would also understand the form of the Apostles' ministry, for its form is controlled by the norm of Christ (5:14). Thus, while working out from his own status as apostle, Paul ends by calling the Corinthians back to faith, i.e., he renews the word as proclamation (e.g., 5:20ff.; 12:19f.; 13:5ff.).³⁰

The articulation of his defense is, in reality, a fresh exposition of the Gospel which is set in the context of the charges that have been raised against him. In order to confront the Corinthians with the norm against which all Christian effort is to be measured, and not with a comparison of himself with his opponents which is based on their norms, he is led to "the presenting of the revelatory event

²⁹ Funk, *ibid.*, p. 167.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

within the horizon of their mutual status before the Lord." As a consequence he is required to set out the basis of his apostleship in relation to the kerygma. In doing so, Paul exposes the claims of his opponents for what they really are: "idle claims based on self-commendation (10:18 and often)." Paul cannot be like his opponents who have no real measure for their boasting; he must remain within the measure that God has allotted to him (10:13).

Paul's exposition of the gospel, therefore, is a re-presentation of the kerygma in language that speaks to the controversy in which he is engaged. While pre-Pauline kerygmatic formulae have not been identified in 2 Corinthians,³¹ it is clear that Paul is "listening" to the kerygma, but in such a way that the terms of the kerygma are heard in relation to the concrete realities of his own life and work (e.g., 1:3-10; 4:7-12; 6:3-10).³² Especially instructive is his characterization of the Christ event in 13:4a: "True, he died on the cross in weakness, but he lives by the power of God" (NEB), a characterization that is immediately applied to the apostolic office (13:4b). Outside of the Corinthian correspondence *asthenēs* and its cognates are nowhere used to characterize the humiliation side of the kerygma, but they are employed here because *asthenēs* is a catchword of Paul's opponents (10:10; 11:21,29ff.). Moreover, the four terms of 4:8f. (afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down), which arise out of the Apostle's immediate experience,³³ are set in a kerygmatic context (4:10f.) and show that the power

³¹ *Ibid.* Funk notes: "One has to allow for the possibility that pre-Pauline formulae lie back of such passages as 1:3ff. and 2:14ff."

³² *Ibid.*, p. 169, citing J. M. Robinson, *Kerygma und historischer Jesu* (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), pp. 179ff.

³³ *Ibid.* "*thlibomenoi*: cf. 2:4 (occasioned by the Corinthians themselves); 1:8 (experienced in Asia); 7:5 (experienced in Macedonia); 6:4; 8:2 (also the lot of the Macedonian churches). *aporoumenoi*: cf. 1:8. *diōkomenoi*: cf. 11:23ff.; 12:10; I Cor. 4:12. *kataballogenoi* (only here in Paul): whether this term means that the Apostle was struck down with a weapon (6:5; 11:23-25), thrown into prison (6:5; 11:23), or simply abused (6:4ff.; 11:26ff.), it is descriptive of history. The verbal parallels are significant, of course, only as 4:8f. is read with 1:8ff.; 6:2ff., and 11:23ff. in view. Sentences

of God is operative only in and through weakness (4:7 and 12:9 provide the norm). A similar observation can be made with reference to 1:3-11, where a comparison of 1:5f. with 1:8f. makes clear the intimate relationship between Paul's situation and the way in which the kerygma comes to expression.³⁴ Other passages, such as 2:14ff., and 6:3ff., and 8:9 likewise support this view.³⁵

While Paul's thinking is informed by the kerygma throughout, the kerygma comes to expression in a new context, which requires that the language of the kerygma be shaped to that context. It is only in this manner that the word can occur. If the contention is correct; that Paul is here "present-ing" the kerygma within the context of his and the Corinthians' mutual status before the Lord, then it follows that the word of reconciliation is coming to "expression *anew* because it is being *heard anew*." It is being encountered in a context in which the categories of Romans or even I Corinthians, for example, do not immediately speak, without translation. "In such a context the articulation of the kerygma may, therefore, have little or no verbal continuity with the tradition, or with the Apostle's own articulation of

such as 12:10 provide the basis for the Apostle's repeated reference to his personal history and bear out the contention that the language is evoked by his situation. In 4:8ff. the first term of each pair expresses his 'weakness,' the second gives negative expression to his 'power,' i.e., his weakness does not and cannot lead to total defeat."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170, citing J. M. Robinson, "The Historicality of Biblical Language," in Bernhard W. Anderson, (ed.) *The Old Testament and the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 145, 149.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

it elsewhere."³⁶

It may, therefore, be set out as a guiding principle that the discontinuity in the language of the kerygma is directly proportional to the discontinuity in the language character of the situation into which it is received. It is necessary, however, to go on and inquire whether the kerygma only *allows* for such discontinuity, or whether in fact it *demands* it. The answer is self-evident: if the kerygma is the norm that probes Christian life before God in the world, then it follows that the kerygma must come to expression in language that is bound up with that life.³⁷

Even with the above statement as a guiding rule, it should be reaffirmed that the kerygma as tradition is the thing that is informing Paul's thinking throughout. This, of course, would indicate that the word that comes to expression is one--if it is the true word.

On the assumption that Paul was converted via the kerygmatic Christ, i.e., the Christ known to him in the kerygma,³⁸ it must be said that the kerygma functions for Paul as text, for it is back upon the text (= tradition) that he must ultimately fall for the norm of his gospel, as seen particularly in I Cor. 15:1ff. (note especially 15:11 and Gal. 2:2).³⁹

It is the kerygma that he knows from tradition that he turns to for text as he unfolds the Gospel. Is there, then, a relationship between this text and the proclamation that arises out of it? Funk would insist that the answer lies in the previous affirmation that the text cannot merely be repeated but must, in fact, be heard anew, and that this means that it must come to expression in language indigenous to

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 170, citing E. Fuchs, *Zum hermeneutischen Problem in der Theologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959), p. 291.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171, citing R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), pp. 187ff.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

the context of hearing, "if it is to serve as the probing word."⁴⁰

This would mean that there is reason to assume that the tradition-Scripture problem is implicit within the New Testament at an early date, and that with it there is also the presence of the hermeneutical problem.⁴¹

Historically, the question with respect to Paul is a relation between the protocreedal affirmation and kerygmatic articulation in a new language context. For Paul the proclamation arises out of hearing, but it is true word only insofar as it invokes faith, i.e., is a word that cannot fail. The word must be heard as the word of grace and received by faith. It is in this hearing that Paul's hermeneutic requires that the saving event be understood as word and word only, "as the word spoken by God in Christ" (cf. 5:19).⁴²

According to Paul, the apostolic ministry is characterized as the ministry entrusted with the word of reconciliation (5:19 which is equal to the word of the cross I Corinthians 1:18). Funk describes it as "the ministry which spreads the fragrance of Christ."⁴³ To those that are perishing it is the fragrance of death, but to those being saved it is the fragrance of life (2:14-16; this is the theme that dominates the whole of 2:14-7:4 and 10:1-13:13). The sufficiency of the Apostle for such a ministry does not rest in self-commendation (3:1-3, 5; 5:12; 6:4; 10:17f.; cf. 12:11), but on the sufficiency

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

which is of God (2:16b; 3:5f.; 4:1, 5, 7; 5:21, etc.). Out of such God-based sufficiency there flows the *πεποίθησις* and/or *πεπονησία* (confidence and boldness) of the Apostle (3:4, 12; 4:1, 13f., 16; 5:6, 11f.).⁴⁴

This fragrance of Christ, the *ζωή*, the *δόξα*, which is the fruit of this ministry, appears to the world as the fragrance of death and weakness (2:14ff.; 4:7-12; 11:30; 12:9f.). Since, however, this ministry is in reality vested with the power of God, its form in the world is ambiguous. This is all for the sake of the basis of the ministry, which can be only the power of God, and hence, for the sake of the power of the message.⁴⁵

The word of reconciliation is the unveiling of the glory of the Lord, which produces a new basis for life in Christ. It is as the divine power is made perfect in weakness that faith may *be* faith. When the Corinthians, at the instigation of Paul's opponents, were asking for the Apostle to legitimatize himself, i.e., provide some extrinsic signs of his apostleship, he could only reply that to provide such authentication apart from the word that calls faith into being would be itself the corruption of faith.⁴⁶

The word, too, is characterized as death (2:16), as that which is veiled (4:3), and as weakness (10:10; cf. I Cor. 1:18ff.; 2:1ff.; etc.). With the hearing of faith, however, all this is reversed. The word cannot, therefore, be understood as pointing to something else, something extrinsic, which can be joined as the basis of faith--whether it be Jesus of Nazareth, or the resurrection, or the faith of the early church itself! The word of reconciliation

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

points only to itself. It is valid only as occurring word, as the word that evokes faith and concurrently arises as confession, as the word which is itself the saving event.

It is necessary to observe, however, that the present-ing of the kerygma, its exposition, takes place as the expositing of him who hears and is, therefore, self- and community-probing.⁴⁷

Paul's authority is for building up and not tearing down (10:8; 13:10), so that when he speaks in Christ he does so for their upbuilding (12:19b; cf. 13:9; 7:8ff.; 1:24; etc.). The word he speaks is a healing, saving word, the word of Grace. It is because it is that that it must also be a testing, probing word. The thing it destroys when heard in faith is "all that rears its proud head against the knowledge of God"⁴⁸ (NEB). It becomes the word of reconciliation only by the participation of the one who hears in the reality of that which is communicated, and this therefore in faith.⁴⁹

It follows that the exposition of the text, in this case the kerygma, that Paul knew from the tradition, fulfills its vocation only as proclamation, and that means precisely as the probing word that brings life. Exposition that does not lead to proclamation is sterile, just as proclamation that is not exposition tends to be uncritical.⁴⁹

What have we exposed when we have done the exposition of the kerygma in II Corinthians? It is well to begin with the Apostle himself. The body of the letter exposes the basis for the apostolic ministry and exhibits the inner connection between the nature of the word that is proclaimed and the basis of the ministry that proclaims

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-175.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

it. Paul sets out the form of his ministry in 2:14-4:15 which gives the appearance of weakness, self-commendation, deceitfulness and guile, on the one hand, but, on the other it manifests sufficiency, confidence, and open appeal to the truth. Thus the sufficiency which Paul possesses comes from God (3:5; etc.), and is accessible only as he embraces the "weakness" of Christ. It is for this very reason that he is confident and bold (introduced in 3:14 and reiterated often). In 3:12-18 he develops the term *καλυμμα* as the contrasting term to *παρρησία*, i.e., uncovering the face is boldness. It is by this means that he reverses the charge made against him; he is accused by his opponents of acting deviously, clandestinely, with cunning and guile, to have adulterated the word of God (4:2; cf. 2:17), which are practices characterized by *καλυπτό!* He asserts that the opposite is, in fact, the case: he speaks in the sight of God, i.e., submits himself to the judgment of the word (2:17), and can commend himself only by the open statement of the truth (4:2; cf. 3:2, 18).⁵⁰

The fact that Paul asks the question, "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?" would suggest that he is subject to the temptation to boast on his own behalf. It would be expected that this is just the kind of defense that he would mount; invoking his own powers as a mystic, and referring to his own achievements. In 10:17ff., 11:1ff., and 12:1ff. he appears to launch into just this type of defense. However, at each crucial point he subtly shifts the burden

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

of his argument, and ends by turning it upside down. As an example, the passage 11:21-30 where he begins by noting that he speaks as a fool, a madman (11:21b, 23), and ends by reversing the thrust of his achievements so that all he can legitimately offer to support his claims are the things that show his weakness (11:29f.).⁵¹

It is significant that Paul makes his defense in the form of a renewal of the proclamation, and in a form that is directly related to the problem at hand.

The polemical cast of 2:14-7:5, though much milder to be sure than that of 10:1-13:13, is evident throughout, reaching its peak in the concluding section 5:11-6:10. Following the initial polemic, which Paul grounds once again in a kerygmatic formulation (5:14f.), he proceeds to the ultimate basis of his confidence and boldness as apostle, which has dominated the argument since 2:14. With Christ the old way of knowing has passed away and the new has taken its place (5:16), with the result that the Corinthians can no more know Paul *kata sarka* than they can the Christ. The appeal for reconciliation that Paul directs to them (5:20) is then renewed in 6:1 as the appeal not to accept the grace of God in vain (cf. Gal. 3:1-5 following on 2:20f.), both of which are bound up with the final polemical note in 6:3. Correctly understood, 6:3-10 is a peroration that sums up the character of his ministry as determined by the norm in 5:14f. As such, it calls for the Corinthians to view him as they must view Christ, and thus to adjust their seeing (or knowing) to their hearing.⁵²

In effect, Paul has combined the proclamation with defense or apology, not only here but throughout the epistle. The appearance at Corinth of itinerant "superlative" apostles, who preach a different Jesus than Paul preached and who cause the Corinthians to receive a different spirit than Paul received, cause the Corinthians to submit

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

to a different Gospel (11:4). Paul's point is that if he is required to defend his ministry then it follows that he is also called to defend his Gospel. The intruders at Corinth have convinced the Corinthians that Paul lacks the marks of a legitimate apostle and that his ministry is therefore to be characterized by weakness. Not having given the evidence which they demanded as the signs of his authority they surmised that it was because he was not legitimate in his claims. Lacking this requisite authority and power, he could not make a claim on the Corinthians for support (11:7ff.), nor could he offer letters of certification such as the intruders were able to present (3:1).⁵³

It has already been noted that Paul specifies as the norm of his ministry the weakness of Christ, through which alone he has access to genuine power (12:9 and 13:3f.). His weakness signalizes his participation in the sufferings of Christ through which he is able to minister salvation and comfort (1:5f.). It is precisely that which the Corinthians--prompted by the intruders--now find objectionable in Paul that the Apostle must offer as his only legitimate claim, although he can, to be sure, play the game of comparison on their terms (10:7f.; 11:17, 21f.; 12:1ff., 11). Nevertheless, if he is to boast, he can boast only of his weakness (11:30; 12:9f.), only of that which shows that his sufficiency is of God (3:5f.; 4:7; 6:4ff.) only of the Lord (11:17f.). Thus it is through his exposition of kerygmatic text as the basis of his apostleship that he confronts the Corinthians once again with the word of reconciliation, in such a way that their seeing of the Christ, the Apostle, themselves, is probed by a fresh hearing of the word. If Paul now appears *tapeinos* to them (10:1), it is not because he is without authority or power, nor because he cannot stand up to powerful opposition (13:2ff., 10),⁵⁴ but because his weakness should lead to their

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-178.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178. Funk footnotes: "It may well be that the 'vacillation' which appears to be the subject of 1:15ff. (the explanation for which continues through 1:23-2:13; 7:5-16!) arises out of his threat to visit them a third time and exercise his power (13:1ff.; cf. 10:2). In which case his decision not to come in order to spare them

strength (13:9). This manner of speaking can be understood, of course, only in relation to the Apostle's power vis-a-vis his churches: he does not and cannot lord it over their faith (1:24), since if he did, faith would not depend solely on their hearing. For the same reason it is of no consequence that he is poor in extempore discourse, or that he refuses to boast of his visions and ecstasies, or that he offers signs and wonders of dubious character. His opponents demand what he cannot deliver: legitimizing evidence *ex ergon nomou* (Gal. 3:5). Such visions, ecstatic experiences, and the like as he has had do not concern the Corinthians at all, they concern only his relation with God. What does concern the Corinthians is his conscious day-to-day conduct of his ministry (5:13). He must refrain from boasting of private experiences so that no one may think more of him than what he sees in him or hears from him (12:6b). Moreover, he is not inferior in knowledge (*gnōsis*) (11:6), which, however, will appear as foolishness apart from faith.⁵⁵

Paul also grounded himself in an interesting kerygmatic function when he refused to accept support from the Corinthians (11:7). He abased himself in order that they might be exalted, i.e., he accepted support from other churches in order to serve them. In these passages, along with similar references (8:9; etc.), we have clear examples of Paul's use of the kerygma as he brings it to expression as the norm of his financial dealings with the Corinthians and also of their relation to the Jerusalem church. In these instances we find that the language is adapted to the specific terms of the situation.⁵⁶

Finally, Paul cannot offer letters of recommendation because the Corinthians themselves are all the recommendation he requires: they are a letter from Christ ministered by Paul and his co-laborers

would be open to further misinterpretation as weakness."

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

(3:1-3). His boast is valid only insofar as God has allotted them to his ministry, and he cannot, like the intruders, boast in another man's labors (10:13ff.). It is only as God has used him as his ambassador of Christ that they can be his boast as he ought to be theirs (1:14). In the final consideration the proof of his legitimacy as Apostle is dependent upon whether or not he has communicated to them the word of reconciliation so that it evokes faith. The question as to his legitimacy, apart from this, is idle.⁵⁷

The Corinthians, under the provocation of wandering apostles, have put Paul to the test (13:13), having missed the signs of a true apostle (12:12), so Paul must put them to the test (13:5) by a fresh exposition of the kerygma. In this instance, he must achieve the latter by submitting himself to the test. The failure of the Corinthians to find Christ in themselves (13:5) will mean that Paul himself has failed (13:6). If the Corinthians do what is right it will matter little if he appears to have failed to meet the test. In fact, his apparent failure may serve for their improvement (13:9). Paul's case must rest on a fresh hearing of the word of reconciliation, a hearing in which both he who speaks and they who listen participate, thereby giving rise to a common understanding. The word must be heard within the spectrum (common memory and experience) of Corinthian individual and community, and if it is heard in the language of their own existence, then they themselves have vindicated Paul--and the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

hermeneutical function of the word has achieved its fulfillment.⁵⁸

D. CONCLUSION

We have used the documents to show that the evangelists themselves began the process that we must continue today if the gospel is to be relevant. Beginning with the basic proclamation, the kerygma, the experience which was shared by those within the community, they interpreted it within the language of the situation to which it must apply. If it is the valid word of God then it must be applicable to all facets of man's experience. In the first example we showed how the early church used the kerygma to interpret the event itself, and, thus, be used as apologetic, i.e., to state the case for the church in answer to some objection of its opponents to the kerygma which it proclaimed. In the second instance we showed how Paul used the basic kerygma to reinterpret a situation and bring his questioners once again into contact with the word of reconciliation. In each case the circumstance of existence has been interpreted in the light of the basic proclamation. The kerygma must be heard in the context of the individual and community, the language of authentic existence, if the hermeneutical task is to be achieved.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER VIII

A WINDOW TO THE PAST

In the preceding chapters it was shown that the New Testament is filled with various forms of literary styles which are used to call forth a response on the part of the reader. The question that must now be dealt with is that element which divides the response from that which stimulated the response. To do this we must understand the difference between the two.

A. EVENT

At the very outset it must be made clear that the formula of John Knox¹ is correct: namely, the event is the precedent of both the community and the product which the community produced. That is to say that the community issued from the event and the New Testament issued from the community. It would thus follow that the community is not the event, and the New Testament is not the event; it can only point to the event.

One stands "within the community" but "under the shadow of the event." It is certainly nearer the truth to say that the church exists because the event occurred than to say that the event occurred because the church exists (although of course we can know of the event only through the church). The church is in every truth the bearer of the revelation in Christ; and that revelation is a continuing act of God; but the act

¹ John Knox, *Criticism and Faith* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), pp. 60-61.

originally occurred at a given time and place; and that original moment, just because it was the great creative moment, is the normative and authoritative moment. Event and community thus stand toward each other not in correlation only but in tension.²

Having said this, we must hasten to add that it is more than simple rhetoric which we are seeking to establish. Within this view must lie the distance between the event as it occurred in Jesus and the Resurrection and the response within the church, which is the New Testament. It may seem like an oversimplification to remind ourselves that the New Testament was not the response to the event itself; the church was the issue and response. The New Testament is a product of the church and a response to the memory, carried within the church, of the event.

In the words of Louis Sherrill:

The Bible is a witness to revelation in that it contains the record of the original revelation by which the church was called into being and to which it owes its continuing existence. It is not the revelation itself, but points to it.³

W. D. Davies puts it this way:

But the immediate foreground of the New Testament is still narrower--it is the life of the Christian Church. The documents of the New Testament were all written by Christians. This means that they are essentially products of the Christian communities of the first century. The New Testament was written by the Church, for the Church, and from the Church. In this sense, it is an ecclesiastical document. It bears the mark of the needs and concerns of the Church on every page. The liturgy of the Church--its cultic activity, prayers, hymns, catechism--

²*Ibid.*

³Louis J. Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 93.

have influenced what we find in the New Testament; the apologetics of the Church are there and its conflicts, and above all its preaching.⁴

These men confirm what has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. The New Testament is the result of the event in the memory of the church and it is expressed in the medium of its time. And, because it is the product of the church, the New Testament reflects all the variety of the life of the church.

It is a coat of many colors; it is as mixed as the life of the Church itself. And twenty years or so ago, it was the variety of the New Testament that was emphasized. The New Testament was understood, not as one book, but as a variety of books. Each book was studied separately, and its distinctive message examined. The approach to the New Testament was analytic.⁵

The last twenty years, however, have wrought a change. A synthetic approach has replaced the analytic. The new emphasis is placed on the oneness of the New Testament. It has been seen that it not only reflects the variety of the church but its essential unity as well.

Just as the primitive Church, however diverse, had behind it a single thrust or energizing conviction; so the New Testament. Despite its variety, it witnesses to an essential impulse which lies behind the Early Church. Can we discover this? What is it that gives its unity to the Church, as to the New Testament, despite their diversity?⁶

Behind the differences within the New Testament, behind the various forms of literary expression, lies a unifying factor which

⁴ W. D. Davies, *Invitation to the New Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

created both the church and the document that records its experience and its memory. If we take the word of the writers, we would hear that it is because they shared a common gospel or good news. There was a single revelatory event which stood behind the literary expression.

The New Testament itself defines this in several places. In I Timothy 1:11, it is expressed as:

It is the Gospel of the glory of the Blessed God. (NEB)

Davies points out that the use of δόξης (glory) as if it were an adjective is misleading; it is more than an adjective. It defines the content of the Gospel. The Gospel is concerned with the glory of God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the text tells us that the Jesus to whom it is bearing witness "reflects the glory (δόξης) of God" (1:3). James tells us that "He is the Lord of Glory (δόξης)" (2:1). It comes out with special force in II Corinthians 4:3-6, where Paul deals with the ministry and the Gospel which is committed to him.⁷

And if indeed our gospel be found veiled, the only people who find it so are those on the way to perdition. Their unbelieving minds are so blinded by the god of this passing age, that the gospel of the glory (δόξης) of Christ, who is the very image of God, cannot dawn upon them and bring them light. It is not ourselves that we proclaim; we proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants, for Jesus' sake. For the same God who said, 'Out of darkness let light shine,' has cause his light to shine within us, to give the light of revelation--the revelation of the glory (δόξης) of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (NEB)

⁷ See above, p. 101ff.

The purpose of the Gospel, then, is defined by the New Testament itself as the giving of the glory of Christ. And, as Paul points out, he is the image of God; the mystery of creation itself illuminated in his face.

Thus we see that the event described in the New Testament is the glory of God which is revealed in Jesus Christ. But what is glory? What does the New Testament have in the background of its thought when it speaks of the Word becoming flesh?

He came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (John 1:14 NEB).

Glory in the Old Testament traditions has three basic meanings which should be part of our understanding of the term which was used to express this event which had occurred among men. The first of these was secular: glory in this sense meant wealth, riches, or property. In spite of the English translations, this is the connotation of the term as used in Genesis 31:1 and 13:2. In Genesis 45:13 and I Kings 3:13 the connotation of the Hebrew term "glory" is success and power.⁸

The second, and more important, meaning which the word connotes in the Old Testament sense is religious.

In many places "glory" is that which in some way or other makes the invisible God visible; the glory of God is the revelation of God, that which reveals or makes him known.⁹

This is frequently associated with natural phenomena such as storms,

⁸Davies, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁹*Ibid.*

tempests, lightnings, thunder, as in Psalm 29; or in clouds, fire, and thick darkness as in Psalm 97. The expression of God's glory is especially impressive in the theophany on Mount Sinai, as in Exodus 24:15-18.

The third usage is related to the second. Here the term "glory" is used of a kind of element which belongs to the upper regions. In those passages where it is used in this form the "glory" of God is usually radiant and terrible.

It is mysterious even as it reveals God; it is like lightning, terrifying and illuminating at the same time. The term "glory" in the Old Testament never loses the connotation of majesty and magnificence. But this "majesty" is not inaccessible, necessarily transcendent; in two ways particularly God's "glory" approaches men.

(a) It comes to dwell among men in certain objects or places, as in the *Tent of Meeting* in the wilderness . . .

(b) Not only does the glory appear in certain places, it is associated with particular times and events. Thus glory of the Lord was especially connected with the Exodus from Egypt. But even there, it was so dazzling that even the great Moses was allowed to see it only by reflection from the rear.¹⁰

Second-Isaiah associates the deliverance from the captivity in Babylon with a revelation of the glory of the Lord (Is. 40:5).

While no simple formula can cover all of the nuances of the Old Testament idea of the glory of God, it does give us some idea as to the multi-faceted concepts that were current in the tradition behind the idea of this "glory." We can observe that its developed form "stands for the revelation of God, his manifestation of himself through his control of the lives of nations and men."¹¹ The glory of God is not

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

a static concept, rather, it is a dynamic one. It is not so much a revelation of what God is in his essence as it is in what he does; it is his active revelation of himself, particularly in certain events.

Davies calls our attention to one further thing that must be said about the Old Testament concept of the "glory of God." In citing some of the later prophetic works he points out that there was a time when it became part of the expectation that the "glory of God" would return to Israel (usually Jerusalem), in the future.

Thus it is fair to say that however much realized by his presence in the Temple, and however much revealed in past events, the glory of God in its fullness is an object of hope in the Old Testament: it belongs to the future.¹²

It is this kind of thinking that belongs to the New Testament concept of the "glory of God." The New Testament itself defines the gospel as the "gospel of the glory of God." This would mean that the claim is made that the gospel is concerned with that activity or presence in which God reveals himself. It would also mean that to make the claim within the context of the New Testament, reference must be made to certain events in which God acts in history. Such, in fact, is the case. It is in precisely the same manner that Second-Isaiah saw the glory of God revealed in the return of Israel from exile in Babylon that the New Testament sees the glory of God revealed in another event--the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It saw the same glory revealed in the life of the Church that issued from that event and was, in effect, the continuation of that event. What

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

is seen in the New Testament, and that which gives it unity, was the claim that in a particular set of events centering around Jesus of Nazareth, the glory of God is present.

The assumption behind the New Testament is that at a particular time, in a particular life, God was decisively at work; its concern throughout is to witness to these events. By this is meant not that it merely pointed to a person, Jesus of Nazareth; this alone would not have availed. Rather it witnessed to him by appropriating his life and living in him so that his life was its life. The New Testament is concerned with events as they are appropriated and become alive in the lives of Christians.¹³

The essence of the Gospel then, was the revelation of God in what He did in a given event, i.e. the life of Jesus, his death, and his resurrection, and ongoing revelation in the continuation of that event as the church appropriated that life into its own. The New Testament writers were pointing in two directions. To the fulfillment of the hope of Israel in the revelation of God in a particular event at a particular time. It pointed to this revelation as an event of the past but which was made present in the continued revelation that took place in the response of faith and life.

The New Testament not only points to the event itself, but it also interprets the meaning of that event in the ongoing life of the community. It points to the way in which that life was appropriated into the present in the life of the church. What had become "external history" to mankind became the "internal history" of the church and of Christians. When that history became internalized, as in conversion,

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

the life of Jesus, or Christ, became the life of the Christian; the potential of Jesus became the potential of the Christian; the future of Jesus became the future of the Christian; it was appropriated in such a manner that one experienced "his life" in their life. So Paul could say "It is not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me," and that he could claim his life was "*εν χριστῷ*."

B. RESPONSE

We have noted that the Gospel is the good news of the glory of God, and have indicated that this was seen as taking place in a given event in history: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. We have implied that the importance of this to the early church, and thus to ourselves, is in the appropriating of "that life" into our own lives. It now remains to see how this was accomplished in the response of the Christian community which issued out of that event.

The essence of our understanding must lie in our awareness of what the New Testament is and what it contained. Günther Bornkamm¹⁴ has said that we must cope with the primary and intrinsic secret to which the New Testament directs us. He asserts that God's Word has entered into the scene of human history in the event of Jesus of Nazareth, but that when the appropriating of his life into the internal history of the church took place, it in effect became one

¹⁴ Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 1-5.

with man's word--that the Word of God could only be understood as it was translated into a truly human word.

The impact of this, for us, is the fact that the revelation which came into human history took form when the church, the continuation of that event, translated it into terms of human understanding and appropriated it for human involvement. The task of the early evangelists was to proclaim that this event which was of "the glory of God" had, in fact, been spoken in a human word through the actual humanity of Jesus. Moreover, it must continue to be a human word; a word spoken through the community which had incorporated the life of Jesus into its own. This idea and form is expressed by Paul in one of his earliest letters, written to the Thessalonians:

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers (I Thess. 2:13).

Unfortunately the task was not that simple. The evangelists and teachers of the early church were in constant tension to keep the Word of God from becoming submerged in the human word. They battled against the corruption of the divine Word through human ordinance and human tradition (Col. 2:9ff.). They were under constant pressure to establish that the kerygma which they proclaimed was historically, prophetically, and actually the revelation of the "glory of God."

Thus the response became a problem not only of proclaiming the kerygmatic event itself, but of defining that event in terms of history and prophecy. It became a matter of apologetic, i.e. the presentation of the case for, as well as proclamation of, the event

itself. It became a matter of demonstrating the effectiveness of the Word in the lives of the community itself. But the problem did not stop there. If the claim of the church was valid, that the life of Jesus continued in the community through the appropriation of "that life" in the life of the church, it must show the continued activity of the divine Word as it was incarnate in the very human word of the church.

It is in this sense that biography was not enough. Nor was it enough to proclaim the "words of the Lord." The event itself had become "external history" which could be lost in the isolation of time and place. It must be demonstrated that the event had become "internal history" and was an ongoing word because Christ (God) continued to live and speak the words of revelation in and through the life of the risen Lord who lived in the life of the church. If this were to be accomplished, it was mandatory that the Word must be shown as active in the life of the church itself. If the Word continued to live in the community which had appropriated "that life" into its own, then it must be a word that was not limited to the historical life of Jesus, but it must be valid in this new, very human, context.

Apologetically, this meant that the church must answer the objections which were raised to the kerygma itself. The church must be able to show that their interpretation of the resurrection event was indeed the fulfillment of Scripture and therefore within the historical framework and expectation of the Jewish people. Also mandatory was an armory of texts which would show the fulfillment of

Jewish hope. It is in this context that the meaning of God's glory in its expression as future hope came to fruition. Apologetic texts, such as those developed in Chapter VII, were exegeted and interpreted to defend this assertion of the kerygma. Lindars has asserted convincingly that these early texts were developed at first because of the special interest of the church to show that the Resurrection was a messianic manifestation. He goes on to show that Psalm 110:1 defined the Resurrection in just this manner and offered the best vindication for it. It is in the same interest that Hosea 6:2 is used to argue that Jesus had indeed fulfilled the Scriptures regarding the third day.¹⁵

The preaching of the apostles was addressed to those who had very recently crucified Jesus. The Crucifixion, though apparently a disaster for his followers, had turned out to be the prelude to the divine act of messianic revelation and vindication. The positive value of the Passion is thus an element of the kerygma from the very first. Jesus is the righteous sufferer of Isa. 53, of the Passion Psalms, and of Zech. 11 and 12. This is the earliest component of the distinctively Christian messianic idea. It arises out of the historical facts. Although it is not without precedents in late Jewish speculations it is sufficiently novel and striking to be seriously questioned, and so it forms the subject of the earliest apologetic proper.¹⁶

The presence of the need of apologetic has further implications in itself. It was only natural that the apostles would expect that the Gospel message in itself would compel belief and acceptance. They had experienced the first blush of triumph which came over them in

¹⁵ Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), p. 252.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

the Easter faith. But they soon discovered that such was not to be the case. The kerygma did not compel belief in and by itself. The question of unbelief became an early problem for the church. Lindars sees correctly that that the church saw a similarity between its position and that of Isaiah at the beginning of his prophetic ministry, and thus included the classic text on unbelief, Isaiah 6:9f., in its intellectual armory at an early date.¹⁷

The second phase of apologetic development is like a move from prepared positions into a volley of fire in the thick of battle.¹⁸

The fundamental Resurrection claim has to be substantiated against the observation that Jesus, though said to be risen, is not visible as the earthly leader. The answers to this objection are formulated in two apologetic forms. First, that he is in his rightful place at the Father's side in heaven, in fulfillment of the Scriptures, and that he is also known on earth by the effusion of the Spirit, which is plain for all to see.

These are two theological ways of expressing the fact of the Resurrection. The first is reached with the aid of Ps. 110:1, which now gains its definitive application to denote the heavenly session. The second makes use of various eschatological passages which mention the Spirit (Ezek. 36:27, 37:14, cf. I Thess. 4:8; Joel 3:1-5, cf. Acts 2:17-21). At some point which cannot be determined with certainty Ps. 68:19 is an important influence in framing an answer to the objection. Its value lies in the combination of the ideas of the Ascension and the Gift of the Spirit in a single quasi-prophetic verse.¹⁹

Near this same time there were objections raised against the manner of Christ's death. The passages already employed in the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Passion apologetic were reformulated in order to provide the answer to each particular item of objection. The Passion narratives of the Gospels have been influenced by this apologetic as the evangelists made their referrals to the Scriptures for details. The understanding of the first Christians is broadened and deepened with regard to the redemptive action in the Passion as they seek to defend it against the attacks of nonbelievers. This apologetic must take into account the mode of execution by crucifixion; and it must account for the humiliations that Jesus was made to suffer. Although the only extant version of it is found in Galatians, it is probable that the first use of the curse in Deuteronomy 21:23 occurred at this time. A special element of apologetic in the beginning seems to have been the treachery of Judas, which, while constituting an embarrassing problem at the beginning, eventually receded to little more than dramatic interest.²⁰

Layer by layer the apologetic developed as the church sought to answer the objections of the unbelievers and, at the same time, to develop its own understanding of response to the event which had occurred in its recent memory. The answers to such problems and objections as the refinement of the messianic claim, the continued and spreading problem of unbelief and unacceptance required new and fresh application of the Scriptural referents, and the necessity to prove definite messianic character in the life and teachings of Jesus, gave

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

the church its impetus for study, defense, and proclamation of the church's claims.

When the church began its ministry to the Gentile community, new problems came into focus. The Hellenistic elements of the church were claiming that as a result of Christ's work of redemption and inauguration of the kingdom, the temple and its cultus are superseded.

In any case they have long felt these to be obsolescent, and offensive to their intellectual approach to religion. It is presumably at about this time that our Lord's prediction of Resurrection on the third day is combined with his prophecy against the temple, so producing a saying which supports the Hellenistic point of view.²¹

The third phase of development takes up all these themes, and adds both precision and complexity.

The apologetic that has been outlined is developed even further as the church spreads and finds new objections and problems to overcome. This trend has been well developed by Lindars²² as he traces it through the later stages to the times when the original apologetic and theological purposes have changed and been forgotten. What is important to our consideration is first, that the problems and questions facing the early church are to be found in these answers that have been outlined so well in the documents; and, that this was a fully human response to explain the event that had happened in the lives of the earliest Christians. The event is that which has been responded to, and the memory of that event, and its interpretation, is what we find in the New Testament.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 255ff. cf. pp. 32-252.

It is, in this sense, the Word of God contained in the human word of translating the revelation into the realm of human doubt and scepticism in which the early Christians lived. And, because it was a human word, destined for human ears, and intended to evoke human response, it was clothed in the idioms, myths, symbols, and themes which would stimulate response in those who listened. God's Word could only become intelligible when it was spoken in terms of human understanding.

This is why Paul could express the deep feeling of thanks-giving in his letter to the Thessalonians. When one considers the context in which the passage occurs, and the situation from which it comes, one can only marvel that this word of revelation was received at all.

For to all appearances the presuppositions for what actually happened were not present there at all. Paul entered Thessalonica (Saloniki) as a poor stranger and eked out a bare living among them by working night and day, having been driven from Philippi--the first congregation of Paul on the European continent--in insult and disgrace. And this man proposed to be the bringer of a divine message, that calls men to turn from their idolatry to the true and living God and to make the ultimate decision about life and death? To all human comprehension, it is a grotesque claim! What kind of a God and Lord can that be, who lets his messenger move through the world so wretchedly, without equipping him with impressive authority and all the marks of divine, miraculous power?²³

In order to gain the correct picture of what this entailed, it must be recognized that in Thessalonica, as in other cities to which Paul took the Gospel, there were many rivals, not only to Paul,

²³ Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p. 6-7.

but to the Gospel he preached. There were roving apostles, heralds of other gods, and others that gave quite a different appearance. "They were well versed and eloquent, inspired and inspiring, slick and showy in technique, praising the powerful deeds of their gods and bewitching their hearers."²⁴ We also know, from II Corinthians²⁵ that there were Christian missionaries and apostles who tried to vie with these heralds and apostles of other gods in proclaiming Jesus Christ, too, as just this kind of powerful God who spoke through the exalted, ecstatic language. Paul wants nothing to do with this kind of witness. "For our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts." (I Thess. 2:3f. RSV.) "For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word; but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" (II Cor. 2:17). As we have shown, Paul rejects the exalted words of wisdom and the portrayal of his own spiritual power or private revelations. Paul rejects them even with the knowledge that, within the context of the society and times in which he lived, such display of the divine presence would have assured him of acceptance and hearing. It would have guaranteed him reception as a true man of God. For Paul, however, God's Word is the word that he can declare only in the reality of his own humanity. It is one that he can declare only

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵ See page 101ff. above.

in the fullness of his human, and personal, weakness. The power must be in God's Word and God's Word alone. Therefore, he can boast only in his weakness (II Cor. 12:9) and presents to men only the crucified Christ as God's power and wisdom (I Cor. 1:24).

God's word, incomprehensible in its richness and wisdom, is still always a word that applies to every man and is to be understandable to everyone. Therefore to the Greeks he becomes a Greek and to the Jews a Jew (I Cor. 9:19ff).²⁶

The Word must be a fully human word, spoken in a human language and in a human context, if it is to be heard and understood by those who must hear it. This is why he admonished his congregation not to revel in its own full possession of the Spirit, but to speak understandably and reasonably, "so that the unbeliever and the one who still stands entirely on the fringe can understand it, be encountered, become aware that God himself calls him, and come to confess: 'God really is in your midst!' (I Cor. 14:25)." ²⁷

In Romans 10:8f. Paul summarizes the miracle and mystery of the divine Word in the simple, yet powerful, sentence: "The word is near you," so near that you can "believe with your heart and confess with your lips."

From now on, the despairing and presumptuous effort by which our human questions about God and the manifold attempts and efforts of all human religion are so deeply and hopelessly marked, moved and directed, should come to an end: an end to that effort of wanting to force God and his word to come near, as it were by arranging a flight into the abyss of the divine in order to bring information from those unattained worlds. Indeed, all religions of mankind are such an unceasing attempt to outdo each other in such high flights and deep plunges in

²⁶ Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

order to force God himself and his word to come near. They are a gigantic effort by which great and sublime discoveries are indeed made and great performances accomplished in religious readiness for involvement and sacrifice. And yet-- they are in aimless movement, despairing and presumptuous, that leads only ever deeper into illusions and hopelessness.²⁸

For Paul the running is over; Christ is here. "But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is to bring Christ down) or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? The Word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach)" (Romans 10:6ff.). God has accomplished what man cannot accomplish. He has come near to us in the form of Jesus. God's Word has arrived and become audible for each of us. It has become flesh "and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). He has sent the Word in human form and commissioned those who would carry it on to carry it in human word.

Whenever this word becomes audible, it can only speak of what God has done to us and the world, of the story of his grace and his judgment, culminating in and summed up in the story of Jesus Christ. Therefore the Gospel always has one and only one indispensible content for all time: Christ the crucified one, Christ the living one, Jesus Christ our Lord. And yet this story of God with the world and with us is not a story that one can recount with only dates and facts, as for example the historical dates and deeds of Caesar Augustus were recorded in monuments and history books. The real mystery of God's story is much more, that into this story the story of our own life is written.²⁹

God's story has become the Word to us and for us. The apostles and evangelists cannot be content to impress upon the world

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

a mere series or chain of events or facts, even if they be saving facts. Facts and events are never language and word in themselves; at the most they can be only sacred formulae. They can only become language for us and God's Word to us when we express ourselves in this Word. Or as Paul expressed it in his thanksgiving at the acceptance by the Thessalonians, ". . . the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (I Thess. 2:13). It is only in this way that the divine Word can become, and can remain, human word.

Thus it should not be surprising to us to find that the attempt was made to show that the Word disclosed in Jesus was a living Word which was not limited to eras and events. If this were indeed the ongoing Word, then it would be found to be valid in the life of the church, in whose members the Risen Lord lived and was the earthly leader, as well as in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. If this is indeed the revelation, the glory of God, then its power would be just as valid in the life of the church as it was in the actual preaching of Jesus.

Thus the works of Jeremias³⁰ and Perrin³¹ should not disturb us. Rather, they should only bring us to the awareness that the Word was used in this manner. That the Word was seen as having validity in new circumstances of man is verification that it was thought of as

³⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966).

³¹ Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

"God's glory" rather than being limited to one time and one man. It is the Word, seen as containing power beyond the singular event of external history, that gives us, as it gave them, hope that its revelation is an ongoing, recurring event which takes place in new times and under new circumstances which speaks to all men in all generations when they take the power and dynamic of "that life" into their own and speak the word of God again in new, truly human words. The evangelist's use of the Word in new contexts, for new purposes, should offer us reassurance that they felt no restriction about the eternal character of the revelation itself. The freedom to change the audience, to place it in a new teaching or homiletic situation only confirms that they responded to the event as the full and living Word of revelation.

It is precisely in the humanity, the human form, and the human idiom that the word receives its nobility and its convincing and redeeming power as divine Word.

For this reason, while they are proclaiming the divine acts, the apostles never tire of speaking of us ourselves in our unveiled reality as man before God: man in his lostness before God, bound in guilt and illusion; man in the body of death; man in his godlessness, who still does not get rid of God. But now more than ever it is man surrounded by God's love, acquitted, redeemed, delivered from his own terrible and hopeless history and dedicated now as a new creature to Christ the Lord and presented with a new life-history.³²

It is this unifying Word, expressed in the framework of man's life and world, that gives us our hope. It is the expression of the

³² Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

divine in a truly human word that brings us into encounter with the revelation of God. This was the purpose of the preaching of the evangelists, this was the purpose of the teachers of early Christianity; and is not this really the purpose of the New Testament? To speak a human word that will bring us into encounter with God's revelation and evoke a response?

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSIONS

When considered in the light of the twentieth-century, the hermeneutical task of the church is to make the Word of God audible for modern man in such a way that he will feel the impact of the event and respond. We must, therefore, develop a theory of revelation within the context of biblical theology, which will make the words spoken in the human context of an ancient civilization speak once again within the contemporary era. We are, in fact, being asked to verify that the Word spoken in the event of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection, and interpreted as valid within the framework of the primitive church is indeed the Word of God and speaks anew to all generations and to all cultural situations.

Our first task is to recognize that historical criticism is a tool which helps us determine the human situation into which the Word first came. It is a tool of biblical theology, a tool which will lead us out of the authoritarianism of dogmatics and into a recognition of the distance which separates us from the historical event. It will help us see that the historical event is, in fact, only a part of the external history of the church: it relates to a time and a place and does not speak directly to the continuing power of the Word. It will help us recognize that the real heart of the issue lies in the revelation of the Word of God which is contained in the record of the historical context.

Historical criticism speaks only to the facts of external history, and therefore does not, indeed cannot, speak to elements of the internal history, which can only be viewed from within the framework of common memory. That memory, which includes the individual and his personal history, is a part of the internal history of the church. That participation which says "*My* beginnings were rooted there: what is past is not gone but becomes present in *my* memory: the reality which was spoken then is not gone but is a part of *my* time: its future is contained in *my* potentiality."

Historical criticism, then, can speak only of the moment of revelation which took place in the lives of men in the past, and can deal with the literary record of that revelation, with its commentary and interpretation, which has been left as a part of the external history of the church.

It cannot deal with the internal history either of the earliest Christians or of the men of the succeeding generations. Historical criticism cannot account for the revelatory moments, the special occasions within our internal histories when the Word speaks to us, and the affairs, facts, relationships of life become intelligible. These become stimulated through the interpretation and identification with the external history. When we identify, i.e. internalize, moments out of the past we feel the Word at work within our own history. Identification may come in the record of men, such as Paul, and the life-changing vitality they felt when confronted with the Word of God as it was contained in the event. It may come in the experience

of a Bonhoeffer as he felt the power of the Word amidst the pressures of secularized society. Such a revelatory moment may come in the life of any person in our own time, who, relating to the Word of God, reveals the Christ event once again. The primary thing is that it becomes a part of our personal internal history and helps in the interpretation of the myriad and confusing experiences and demands upon our life.

Historical criticism helps us to see the Word of God as a fully human word. It accomplishes this by exposing the human situation into which it came as radically human. Authentic faith is compelled to accept the full historicity of the Word. It argues that Jesus was, in fact, a historically real person who came into a historically real world; that he revealed the Word of God in his presence, in his teachings, and in the actions of his life.

Further, it accomplishes this by exposing the fully human situation in which the Word continued to function. It shows that the revelatory moments took place in the actions and lives of fully human individuals enmeshed in the realities of the world. It makes clear that the Word continued to reveal the presence and the power of God in the ongoing course of events as well as in the originating event itself.

It exposes the fact that these revelatory moments were not supernatural or otherworldly, but rather occurred in the situations of life as experienced by the church and its constituency. It assumes that the power was present in the Word itself rather than the men who

proclaimed it or the language and imagery used in its proclamation.

The importance of this for the church today is the realization that the witness of the church demands that we communicate the Word itself, and not just the framework in which it is carried. We must interpret the Word in a language that is audible to the man of this age.

Historical criticism helps us to see the manner in which the evangelists of the early church spoke the Word in language that was applicable to the human situation of their day. It exemplifies and makes clear the need to speak the Word to a fully human situation, and to allow the power to remain in the revelatory moments created by that speaking. This is the hermeneutical task; to express the Word in a manner that is audible in the human situation into which it comes. To express it without perversion so that revelation may be experienced and responded to. Like Paul we must be constantly "listening to the kerygma" as we seek to speak this Word.

If the contention of Fore is correct, "that the church is a grouping of selves in and through which persons tend to experience revelation"; then his second hypothesis is equally true:

The church is the historical outgrowth of the believer's experience and need, the traditional source of continuity of the selves who relate thus to each other, and the visible and 'external' symbol of the invisible and 'internal' experience of God's revelation to man.¹

This would mean that the church is the gathering of selves who

¹William F. Fore, "Communication for Churchmen," in B. F. Jackson, Jr. (ed.) *Communication* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 80.

see themselves in the experiences of the past, incorporate these experiences into their internal history or common memory, and attempt to re-experience the vitality of the event in their own human situation.

In such an atmosphere it becomes mandatory that the revelatory event be seen in the fullness of its human context, in the authenticity of man's existence. We must somehow convey that the revelation of God is not a possession but an event. An event in which the Word renews and re-creates the one who experiences this revelatory moment. We must see that we can only attest to our personal apprehension of the Word and, at best, provide some significant external history about persons of faith, in the hope that another will begin to appropriate this as part of his internal history. We do this as we rehearse the center of our faith, the memory of Jesus Christ. We must "relive" that memory in the context of our human existence, the human existence into which it was given and interpreted and the human existence in which we live. We must, like the early church, appropriate "that life" into our internal history and demonstrate that it contains the authentic, on-going power of the original experience.

H. Richard Niebuhr emphasizes that the church has begun to pay new attention to its tradition. "It sees it not as a dead thing once and for all given for acceptance or rejection, but as a living history constantly being renewed, rethought and re-searched for meanings relevant to existing man."² It is the task of historical

²H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 88.

criticism to expose this history, with all its human limitations and foibles, in order that biblical theology can re-speak the Word into man's new situation.

It has been demonstrated that the evangelists used the tools of a first century world: Palestinian tools to a Palestinian World; Greek tools to a Greek World. To the world between they used a combination of these. They became to the Jew a Jew and to the Greek a Greek. They were bound only by the authenticity of the Word itself, and the humanness of the world into which it came. If we are to make it audible to the world in which we live we can do no less. The hermeneutical task is bound only by the authenticity of the Word and the world in which we live.

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